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***Godmentality: Pentecostalism as Performance in Nigeria***

**By**

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### **Dedication**

To Marcel and Athena. I am grateful for how far we have  
come.

Like Jacob in the Bible who said,  
“For with my staff I passed over Jordan and now I have become  
two bands....”

I also can proudly declare that the person that crossed the Atlantic Ocean  
in 2011 has greatly multiplied in all directions.

Of all I have been blessed with, you two are the greatest of all.

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**Godmentality:**  
**Pentecostalism as Performance in Nigeria**

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2017

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This dissertation employs the concept of “Godmentality” as a framework for capturing the embodied performances of faith actors in the Nigerian Pentecostal movement. From Africa to Asia to Latin America, and North America, Pentecostalism is a huge global phenomenon that not only imbues places and spaces with the breath of the Holy Spirit, it also inscribes time and space with its distinct flavor of worship. In Africa, the Pentecostal movement is sweeping through the urban spaces and covering the spatial and cultural landscape with its activities and promises of redemption. In Nigeria, as people perform their Pentecostal faith and make Pentecostalism a cultural performance, God and faith have become a mentality. The band of believers who form the army of God marching through times and space are continuously configured through various disciplinary



techniques. Those subjectivation techniques turn them to subjects whose bodies have been reshaped such that the performance of their faith is a “natural” activity.

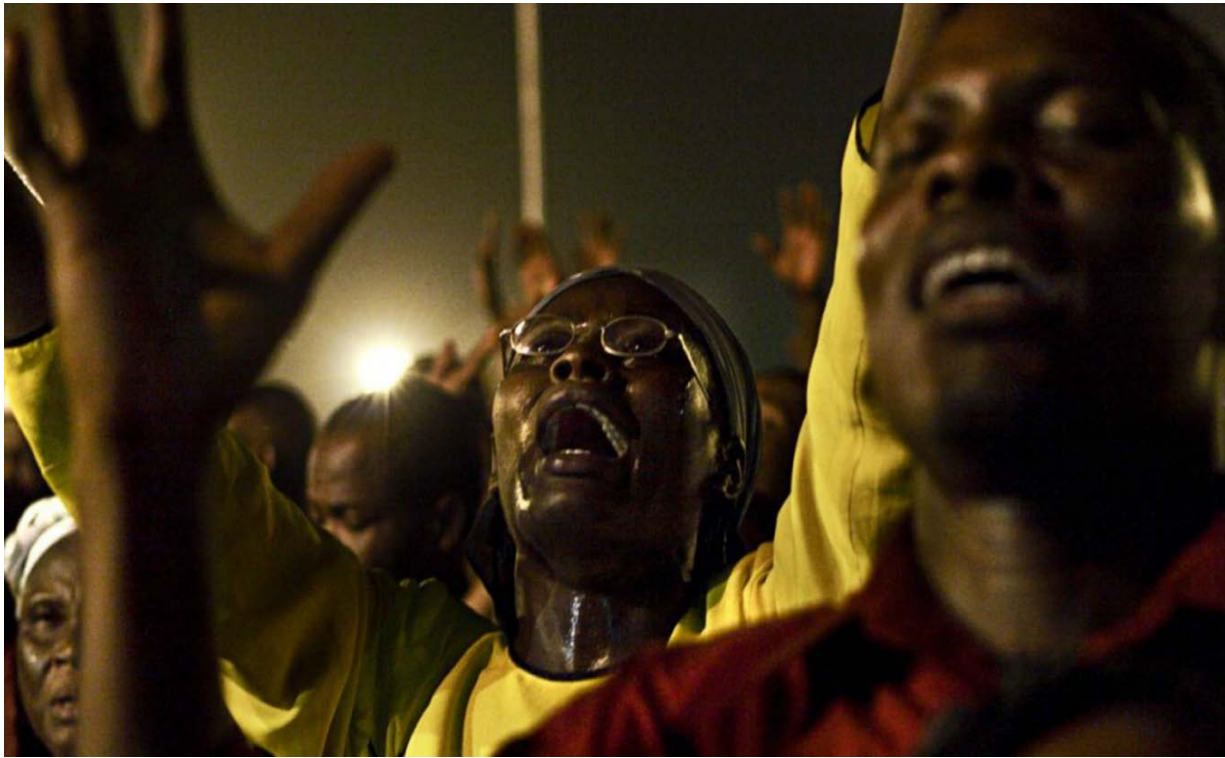
Godmentality explores the subjectivity of Pentecostal Christians and the modes by which they acquire it, how their performative actions shape the social and cultural ecology of Nigeria, and how Pentecostals assert their human agency within the nexus of the various rituals of worship that revise their consciousness. This study builds on existing scholarship on global Pentecostal studies to interrogate the disciplinary techniques of Pentecostal faith, the creativity of faith actors, and the knowledge they create through their embodied behavior. Through ethnographic methods, oral interviews in physical and virtual formats, archival materials, documents and church publications, close readings of church activities, and historical analysis, I interrogate the dramatic nature of Pentecostal worship. From the spectacular performance of miracles, dramatic and intense corporeal worship, prosperity gospel, their domination of the traditional and the New media, apocalyptic vision, and the ways they try to monopolize the public space, I demonstrate the making of the Pentecostal subjectivity, how Pentecostals make their environment to be more amenable for their faith performances, and the ways Pentecostalism has shaped the ways Nigerians understand ourselves as subjects of God.

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**Chapter One:**  
***Godmentality: Performance and Pentecostal Subjectivity***



*Figure 1- Worship during open air crusade.*

My friend heard I was in Nigeria for summer research and asked to come see me. I told her where I was staying in Ibadan but she had no idea where the neighborhood was located. She asked me to describe the location. I told her to take a commercial vehicle to Ojoo from Iwo-Road and,

When you get to Mountain of Fire and Miracles Bus Stop, walk a few metres towards the church, and turn to the untarred road on your left. Walk for 500 metres or so and then you will come across an Aladura church where they also have a maternity home with a huge signboard. At that point, turn to the right and walk to the end of the street. There is an unpainted house on that street has a banner at the gate that says Winners Chapel House fellowship meets there. Turn to your left again; walk down the road until you come across a C& S church on your right. You cannot miss it; you are likely to see their members in their white soutane walking towards the church. My place is right behind that church.

My friend chuckled and asked if I knew the names of the streets so she could find them if she got lost. I told her I did not but with those churches as descriptive markers, she would not miss me. After she had hung up, it occurred to me how much the Nigerian urban landscape had become littered with churches, especially Pentecostal ones, such that their locations have become spatial markers. Scholars of global Pentecostalism have referred time and time again to its exponential growth rate but the growth is also not just about numbers but about the ways it reshapes society and creates avenues for economic, social, and moral development.<sup>1</sup> The rhetoric and semiotics of faith that pervade the cultural atmosphere are more than signposts of urban cartography, they are also markers of temporal and spiritual changes the Nigerian society had witnessed. Churches are no longer only places of worship tucked into residential neighborhoods, exploding the innate character of the Nigeria urban spaces, they are also indices of social and cultural changes.

When I was growing up in the same Ibadan in the 1990s, churches were already there but there were not as many as we have now. Pentecostalism was still rather a fringe phenomenon then. I remember my father, a partially committed member of the Anglican Church, insisting my mother would not take us -the children- with her to those emerging charismatic churches that eventually metamorphosed into Pentecostal churches. My father took their charismatic frenzy for mental maladjustment and considered their emphasis on the supernatural as irrational; he viewed acts such as “deliverance” or spirit possession as sheer madness. Nowadays, thanks to Nigeria’s socio-economic and socio-political changes, the liberalization of the mass media, appropriation of African spirituality, accessibility of the Bible in indigenous languages, and the dynamisms of Pentecostalism, those churches are presently the dominant cultural movement in Nigeria. The most phenomenal growth of Pentecostalism has taken place in Nigeria (a factor that one might also attribute to the large population), and orthodox Christians like my father have had their

orthodox Anglican (and Baptist) churches either relegated to the margins or taken up a more charismatic or “Pentecostal”<sup>2</sup> approach to surviving.<sup>3</sup>

Later that night, loud pleasant music boomed from loudspeakers from a nearby church having a vigil kept me awake. The house was dark; there was no electricity. The church was not the only source of noise piercing the darkness, the chugging of generators from surrounding households added to the cacophonous melody of the night. My household slept through it all, they were used to it. They told me I only noticed the noise because I just returned home from the United States and I would get used to it again in a matter of days. The music from the church vigil changed to loud raucous prayers by what I imagined to be a horde of worshippers making their case before God at the “witching hour.” Occasionally, the lead pastor’s voice would come on the loudspeaker and he would describe a scenario or relate an individual’s experience that had to do with the constant epic war between good and evil, darkness and light, the believers and non-believers. He would then translate the scenario he had just related to the congregation into a prayer point that would enable them to launch the power of God on their own behalf. “Oya, aduraaaaaaa!” (Now pray!), he would yell to prompt the church to pray and they would, hundreds of voices buzzing like a million bees on the same microphone. All night, the shouts of what God will do and should do on behalf of each person made me wonder how people get to the point where God’s agency defines their basic perception of life and its mechanics.

In those nights when I was kept awake, I had cause to think about how much the environment I had grown up in had been overtaken by churches. The media, traditional and new, were filled with church programs and advertisements of “Come to Jesus” and “God will do it.” The appeal of Pentecostalism includes how its theology provides a refuge for the disenchanting modern subject, the spectacular nature of its worship which coopts the mass media to stage the

power of the Holy Ghost before an audience with a prior belief in supernatural power, and because the performances of its rituals are tactile enough to “touch human hearts.”<sup>4</sup> More than a metaphorical turn of language, Pentecostalism could touch one, literally, with its multi-sensory invasion and near domination of public spaces. There were billboards, posters, signage, and other indices of social churchification haphazardly springing up all over Nigerian cities. Residential areas, business complexes, and public spaces were being taken over by churches such that even among themselves, the churches contended for the public sphere.<sup>5</sup> Like Saidiya Hartmann, I wonder about body that lives under the anointing-suffused environment of Nigeria: what is the very things that make us human –our fleshly bodies, soul, heart, and mind, are the very “inroads of discipline” rather than affirmation of humanity or promise of liberation?<sup>6</sup>

With Pentecostalism pervading the land, Sundays no longer looked like the traditional “day of rest” as I grew up to know it. Churchgoing had become an event that co-opted non-Christians and non-religious populations as well. Wherever a Pentecostal church sprang up, an ad-hoc market also came up to cater to the needs of the churchgoing demographics. The vendors sell vehicle stickers; almanacs and prayer books, anointing oil, anointed handkerchiefs, branded wrist bands inscribed with the church logo, T-shirts, DVDs of Christian songs and drama; religion and motivational books; calendars with images of posh houses, cars, and their pastors; writing pads plastered with faces of “daddy-in-the-Lord” and his wife. There were key holders and car air fresheners emblazoned with church logo and tithe and offering booklets designed with visual emblems of the dollar note (including Benjamin Franklin’s image!) The roads that led to the big churches had resulted in the creation of makeshift markets where different people gather to buy and sell to believers. In one instance, one of the traders was a Muslim woman in

Hijab and interestingly, her difference –highlighted by her sartorial agency- did not seem to attract any uneasiness among the churchgoing crowd.

The more I transit through the Nigerian urban space where these churches were mostly located, the more I wondered how this burgeoning cultural religiosity was inscribing our bodies, modeling the texture of our somatic experiences, and configuring an ideomotor navigation of public spaces. Given this radical transformation of the public space because of the explosion of the Pentecostal movement, this dissertation studies the mode of acquisition of the Pentecostal subjectivity by exploring how Pentecostals problematize the world to create the ethics of behavior or shape the performative acts that enable them triumph. I ask, *how do the ways people understand themselves as subjects determine their agency and their self-conduct in worship or in the performance of their identity? In what ways do the interactions of bodies with religionized spaces they occupy structure the contours of Pentecostal subjectivity and determine their performances of faith? How does the performance of Pentecostal subjectivity reshape, recreate, or (merely) influence the ethos of the Nigerian socio-cultural and socio-political atmosphere such that the possible range of actions of believers further interpellates them into subjectivity?*

To investigate the Pentecostal religious subjectivity, I created a theoretical frame I have labeled “Godmentality.” Using this conceptual framework of Godmentality, I will be investigating the making of the Nigerian Pentecostal subjectivity; the internalization of certain disciplinary ethics and subsequent performativity of Pentecostal worship and identity; and the creativity and inventiveness Pentecostal mysticism engenders. I will be looking at the experiences and events of Pentecostalism to analyze how the mind of the public is imbued with a “God mentality” and how that shapes their subjectivity as individual citizens and as a body politic. Pentecostal theology’s engagement of the triad of spirit, soul, and body (all linked by the



immanent presence of the Holy Spirit) already makes any presumption of a mind/body split an impossibility. The idea now is exploring how the persona of Pentecostals is manufactured through their relationship with their God-suffused environment. The question became more poignant for me when my family turned out to be right; after some weeks in Nigeria, my mind had begun to train itself to accommodate all the religious activities. Gradually my body schema was becoming integrated with the Pentecostal cultural practices that pervaded every aspect of our lives and configuring my body to a form of political technology that simultaneously absorbed and repelled those indoctrinating realities. I was acquiring a new subjectivity and my reflection on it shaped the direction of this dissertation.

I will be following two main tracks in this project to address the above-stated questions: one, Pentecostalism as a performance; and two, the various performances that make up aspects of Pentecostal rituals. Both tracks will illustrate how the conversion experience sets in motion a series of actions that “make” the Pentecostal identity, and how the process of Pentecostal refashioning creates a revision of their spatiality and temporality thus making public culture amenable for the performance of their subjectivity. Throughout this dissertation, I will be working on the self-recreating project of Pentecostal performances and how they shape the nanobehavior of Pentecostals. Performances as an epistemological route to investigating Pentecostal studies are significant because “performances mark identities, bend time, reshape and adorn the body, and tell stories.”<sup>7</sup> Performance not tell stories, they do through the body of the performer and this dissertation is an exploration of the truths contained in Pentecostal bodies.

I start by highlighting Michel Foucault’s “governmentality,” a conceptual term that influenced the ideas that underwrote this study (and from where I derived the neologism, “godmentality”). Governmentality, in Foucauldian terms, explores the calculated tactics through

which the government produces its citizens' pliability towards political rule using certain disciplinary techniques on the bodies. From the regimentations structured by the order of disciplinary knowledge to practices that divide people from others and even themselves, to people's agency in making themselves subjects, we see how historical and cultural events have resulted in the making of a specific modern subject that function within established social systems.<sup>8</sup> "Governmentality" was a neologism he coined to explain the way state governs the body of its citizen and the rationality, disciplinary techniques, strategies, and justifications that underline subjectification.<sup>9</sup> Governmentality shows procedures of power in governing systems and the inextricable political rationality that undergirds it.<sup>10</sup>

While Foucault's governmentality acknowledges religious provenance and his works are liberally peppered with religious allusions and rhetorical devices,<sup>11</sup> and his description of the docile subject's body of the 18<sup>th</sup> century evokes Judeo-Christian conception of creation: "something that can be made; out of a formless clay, an inept body (from which) the machine required can be constructed" and the end of this creation is the production of a political subject "that can be subjected, used, transferred, and improved,"<sup>12</sup> his work runs short of capturing the political and social reality of the "God dimensions" for a populace whose worldview revolves around the proximity of the supernatural world to the natural such as Nigerians/Africans. God and the supernatural as the underpinning of a society's outlook prompt Nigerian scholars of Pentecostalism and the public sphere to sound alarmist in their analysis of "God mentality" and its effects of weakening the society's thinking capabilities. Dennis Edewor, for instance, construes the society's fixation with God as a mere role-playing consequent of their brainwashing and that religious activity are so "embedded in the cerebral cortexes of the adherents that they just act it out automatically."<sup>13</sup> Fred Amadi also argues that Pentecostal

Christianity “induces misrecognition of the sources of social problems.” He says that Nigerians, for instance, instead of “demanding that government improve power supply...blame witches and demons for the appalling shortage of electricity in the country.”<sup>14</sup> Neither Edewor’s assertion of public zombification nor Amadi’s argument that religious beliefs induce ill logic is entirely correct. Pentecostals are not brainwashed in the sense of the popular use of the term and the mental laziness they highlight does not mean that a mentality that premises God’s agency over human agency entirely lacks the latter. Through the paradigm of Godmentality, I offer a more nuanced understanding of the governmentality of the African subject: it does not revolve primarily around the state or apparatuses of governance but around God and the metaphysics of existence.



*Figure 2 – Churches have evolved to collecting tithe and offerings through automated means*

Godmentality is concerned about the teleological re-creation of the body of a Pentecostal convert to make it into a subject for whom worship becomes a “natural” activity. Church performances, I note, function as “vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory

and a sense of identity through reiterated, or what Richard Schechner called “twice-behaved behavior.”<sup>15</sup> These “twice-behaved behavior” features as a key component of all kinds of cultural performances and “performers get in touch with recover, remember, or even invent these strips of behavior and then rebehave according to these strips.”<sup>16</sup> The idea of a “storable” behavior that can be preserved points to the human body as the container or the repertoire that holds these actions and whose enactment of them makes their “re-performance” meaningful. Since the character of places is established by conventions of behavior and according to Judith Butler, “they inform the lived modes of embodiment we acquire over time,”<sup>17</sup> Pentecostal performances ultimately transfers embodied knowledge that revises social norms and immures bodies into subjective modes of being. These Pentecostal performances not only transfer embodied knowledge through daily staging of believers’ faith in their contestation for dominance in the public spheres, they also actively revise social norms with behavior engendered by their activities at church sites. Ultimately, the re-created body of the religious subject that performs the prescriptive ethics of its religious content on the social stage widens the parameters of what is called “church” when its performative acts synchronize non-church spatiality with consecrated church sites.

My conception of Godmentality does not merely investigate how abstract forces manipulate and control the body but also the somatic performances of people who have internalized certain forms of knowledge, and use an ensemble of rituals that evolve from that embodied knowledge to institutionalize their faith. I am investigating the procedures by which a cultural imaginary becomes suffused with God and spirituality such that it determines the range of people’s possible behaviors (from sheer conformity to political resistance). This framework concentrates on the modes of production of Pentecostal religious subjects through disciplinary performance practices that take place largely at individual levels. I, therefore, construe

Godmentality as both a process and an arrived state of subjectivity that occurs when religious disciplinary techniques configure and conditions a believer into certain modes of thinking about God, guiding their own self-conduct, and creatively acting out their embodied faith in their daily behavior.<sup>18</sup> Godmentality, as I have framed it, captures faith performance as an interaction of interiority – the site where the Holy Spirit occupies, where desires and thoughts are produced- and external socio-political factors that interact with the body that bears the Holy Spirit.

My conception of “Godmentality” is also not a mere “Pentecostal version” of Foucauldian paradigms of governmentality (which is strictly historically specific and culturally continuous) but an address of the critical ways spectacular Pentecostal activities train the body. I co-opted Foucault’s term partly because my analytic structure focuses on the body and disciplinary techniques, and because “Godmentality” provides a both linguistic shorthand and methodological tool that explains and guides this study. Godmentality comfortably borrows from governmentality because God and government are intertwined in the Pentecostal imaginary in the form and context of power relations and contestations.<sup>19</sup> As much as studies have shaken up the rigidity in Foucault’s top-down approach to studying the conduct of (human) conduct, there is still a need for an enhanced focus on the enlivening and creative content of the disciplinary techniques and regulation that produces the subject. Peter Dwyer is right when he says Foucault’s study makes him a “purveyor of powerful images –docile bodies, military regimes, prison surveillance, and the Panopticon- that convey more meaning that they substantiate....his (Foucault, that is) own heavy reliance on official records and account assumes a consonance between stated policy and actual practice that is not empirically tested.”<sup>20</sup> More than a failure of substantiation through qualitative data is the fact that Foucault leaves one with an impression that governmentality stiffly fashions humans through an assembly line. The allusion to

standardization and normalization risks missing the creative differences of individuals whose bodies have been taken through disciplinary regimes. The subjective experiences of individuals that form the army of God make for internal variation that results in outflows of creativity.

## **Godmentality and the Pentecostal Subject**

*...But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway-* Apostle Paul.<sup>21</sup>

*I am glad I got here before any customers—I mean worshippers—well, customers if you like. I always get that feeling every morning that I am a shopkeeper waiting for customers. The regular ones come at definite times. Strange, dissatisfied people. I know they are dissatisfied because I keep them dissatisfied. Once they are full, they won't come again. Like my good apprentice, Brother Chume. He wants to beat his wife, but I won't let him. If I do, he will become contented, and then that's another of my flock gone forever. As long as he doesn't beat her, he comes here feeling helpless, and so there is no chance of his rebelling against me. Everything, in fact, is planned – Brother Jero.*

Given the predominance of Pentecostalism in contemporary Nigerian cultural landscape, the satiric vision of dramatist, Wole Soyinka, in his 1969 play, *The Trials of Brother Jero*, has ironically turned into a prophetic insight.<sup>22</sup> The play centers on a prophet called Brother Jeroboam (or Brother Jero for short) who can be described as a charlatan and a fraud who preys on his followers through psychological manipulation. By exploiting his followers' innate desires for economic and social status through promises of a supernatural materialization of their dreams, he manages to keep them as a "flock" within his fold. Scholars have focused on the falsity of the religiosity Bro Jero espouses and characterized Brother Jero as a "caricature" to argue that the dramatist's placing him in "improbable situations make him act in a manner for the audience to laugh."<sup>23</sup> Other scholars that have commented on Brother Jero's hypocrisy that he was merely "pretending to be a prophet" inferring that his dramatic act was a double layer of pretense.<sup>24</sup> Perhaps the greatest strength of Brother Jero's character is expressed in the above

epigraph where he more or less describes his understanding of human vulnerabilities. In the play, Bro Jero “steps out of character” by breaking the fourth wall to inform the audience of “the brilliance of his stratagems and the folly of his followers.”<sup>25</sup> By using this theatrical technique, Soyinka creates a character that demonstrates how he uses his knowledge of human psychology to *plan* his acts of the supernatural. Worship is revealed more of a dramatic enterprise pre-planned and staged for an overly credulous audience rather than any metaphysical or transcendental situations. The predetermined way Brother Jero scripts his own acts to induce desired behavior in his flock or customers -as he himself characterized his followers- reveals him to a skilled director of life and its art.

Brother Jero’s characterization foregrounded the Pentecostal movement that erupted in Nigeria and West Africa in the 1990s. Through the activities of Brother Jero in the play, we see the governing of the religious subject in charismatic Christianity as a planned one that requires a series of spectacular performative acts that configures bodies of followers such that conforming to rules of pastoral power becomes both thinkable and possible.<sup>26</sup> Brother Jero’s tactics organize the consciousness of his congregation and it prompts their pliability and the ways they perform their faith and followership. Just as in governmentality, Godmentality makes it possible to condition religious agents who can choose their own paths when given a range of actions although they work towards the ends that the coordination of behavior is summarily directed. The disciplinary techniques of governing human conduct are affected through the mechanism of external and internal forces. The latter consists of certain ethics of “self-on-self,”

which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, a way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality...Each implies certain modes of training and modification of individuals, not only in the obvious sense of acquiring certain skills but also in the sense of acquiring certain attitudes.<sup>27</sup>

The idea of self-on-self ethics suggests believers carry out certain acts of personal discipline and stylized behavior that results in a congruence of who they are when they convert to the Pentecostal faith and the ideal they want to be. This notion of “becoming Pentecostal” or becoming a subject of God in Pentecostal movement involves performing the norms and ethics of Pentecostal faith until the body or the self, attunes itself to the reality of changed identity.

*The Trials of Brother Jero* might have preempted the theatrical dimensions of the dynamics of Pentecostal worship and pastor-congregation relationship, but theatre and performance studies still need to engage the embodied nature of Pentecostal theology.<sup>28</sup> Soyinka’s scathing critique of pastoral authority, worship, and the docility of religious followership works well as a satire but are worshippers really dupes of the Brother Jero archetypal pastor or there is an underlying rationality to their credulity? Does the performance of their faith give room for agency? Are they as much “performers” as their pastors and their worship is predicated on faith as a political praxis? Soyinka’s disdainful gaze on Brother Jero’s followers, portraying them as dolts who fall prey to predatory encounter with their pastor falls short of providing an understanding of why people are the way they are, why they stay in faith despite its shortcomings, and why their “God mentality” is an inescapable reality of the various disciplinary techniques spirituality has worked on their bodies. Godmentality gives a more nuanced view of why believers are not mere zombies but complicated beings whose religiosity are inscribed on their bodies. Characterizing Pentecostals as agential being is, of course, mindful of the note of caution sounded by cultural critic, Saidiya Hartmann, that the universal applicability of “agency” thereby using theories to romanticize pain and punishment,<sup>29</sup> or in the case of Pentecostalism, the insalubrious aspects of subjectivation.



The body in Pentecostalism is critical because that is where its theology lies: as an embodiment and in form of redacted oral narratives. Ruth Marshall's study of Nigerian Pentecostalism engages subjectivation and the techniques through which they are enforced and established. Even though Marshall's political philosophical approach does not use the language of performance, her description of the Born-Again process evokes performative techniques: the conversion to being "born again" starts as an event of rupture that walks forward to establish the status of the Pentecostal the "born again Christian" status just acquired. This journey involves several techniques of submission and subjectivation that includes "bodily techniques (fasting, speaking in tongues), narrative forms (testimony, prayer, song), and aesthetics (dress, comportment). Through this process, the convert gradually learns with heart, soul, and body, how to experience the truth of revelation and the power of the Holy Spirit."<sup>30</sup> Marshall observes that "rather than adherence to a particular group of the institution, the born again evangelical program has as its principal object the transformation and control of individual conduct and the creation of a particular moral subject."<sup>31</sup> This "particular moral subject" is created by the technology of relations between the body, the rituals it performs, the knowledge that haunts and stimulates the specificity of its performance, and the range of political possibilities unleashed through the subject's body. Marshall describes the Pentecostal conditioning as one made possible by the "prescriptive apparatus" of Born Again/Pentecostal Christianity and the prepackaged subjectification elements – certain self-on-self techniques that,

...stages personal empowerment through ethics of submission...the entire...program is centered on the question of rupture and change, perpetual overcoming; it employs a language of will, intentionality, self-help, self-mastery and personal empowerment. Yet the individual is acknowledged as being fundamentally powerless, at God's mercy, dependent entirely upon his grace...<sup>32</sup>

Like Foucault's docile bodies, the Pentecostal body, at conversion, begins a process of re-formation and recalibration for the political project of God and the structures of power that are operated in His name. Although both Foucault and Marshall evoke the Christian creation myth of creation in their postulations on the formation of a subject and while they provide useful theoretical insights, their philosophical approach does not engage tactile ritual practices that enable the acquisition of religious subjectivity. Such ritual practices that condition Pentecostals such that "the voices in our heads and the feelings in our bodies are linked to the cultural, historical, and political contexts"<sup>33</sup> are found in the theatricality of the faith. Pentecostalism, particularly, premises intense corporeal engagement that stimulates the body to states of feverish arousal and ecstatic pleasure that has potentials of subjectivation due to the physiological needs they meet. Public performance of the faith has the transformative power that can produce or calcify an existing inner conviction. This, of course, presupposes that the actor of faith and his/her body are discrete entities thus expressions of faith are "merely" theatrical.

The idea of the separation of the internal reality from an outwardly performed self or the external persona, has historically, been one of the reasons for anti-theatrical prejudice in Western culture.<sup>34</sup> According to Yaron Ezrahi, "as an artistic enterprise based on impersonation and illusory representations of people, the theatre has from the very beginning raised the problem of the knowledge of persons (including self-knowledge) and linked it with hypocrisy and sincerity as moral issues."<sup>35</sup> Scholars who employ dramaturgical principles to investigate daily life have tended to arrive at the same conclusions: the behavior is external to the body. Erving Goffman's *The Presentation of the Self in Daily Life* was a study of living as acts of premeditated performance. People, Goffman asserts, put up a "front" that either convinces them that who they perform is who they are, or prompts a cynicism in them that all human acts are staged for an

observing public.<sup>36</sup> Like Goffman, Schechner also argues that the performance of “real life” presumes that there is a separable reality from the external persona that is being staged before the public. He says,

Because the behavior is separate from those who are behaving, the behavior can be stored, transmitted, manipulated, transformed. The performers get in touch with, recover, remember, or even invent these strips of behavior and then rebehave according to these strips either by being abrobed into them (playing the role, going into trance) or by existing side by side with them (Brecht’s *verfremdungseffekt*)<sup>37</sup>

Unlike the artifice of stage acting that results in “make-believe,” Schechner presents an alternate concept that depicts the theatricality of daily life and personal identity: make-belief. Make-belief, he says, tries to blur the difference between daily life and a “front” to create the same reality it depicts. For instance, a presidential performance manipulates the viewing public into developing certain beliefs about his/her authority and, also, establishes that authority before them.<sup>38</sup>

The reality of an outward character different from an inner one is more tenuous in religion where the Pentecostal, for instance, is supposed to be a regenerated being “who lives, moves and has his/her being in Jesus Christ”<sup>39</sup> and which supposes there can be no “front” in the Goffmanian sense but only one authentic character who is the ideal personas/he performs. This does not preclude the fact that performances of religious identity have established norms of social behavior, a ready-made “front” which makes the Pentecostal performance identifiable in the first place. However, in the context where religious behavior is believed to be inspired by an imminent presence – the Holy Spirit- there is no fragmentation of self that results in a creation of a separable self whose acting cues are deliberately handpicked to give off an impression of the self to the public. In the Pentecostal context, make-belief is an internal animation that is

consequent of the body's training and submission to certain self-on-self ethics that transform the body.

The notion of performing one's conversion to inaugurate the reality of taking up the Pentecostal identity has been a project that either tries to, persuasively or coercively, reconcile the identity a person takes up when s/he signals their desire to become a Pentecostal convert with who they become by performing the stated ideals of the faith they have embraced. Just like the case of Brother Jero, performance does not always guarantee that the disciplinary techniques applied on the self by the self will always work and this makes it possible for faith to be a mere "devotional process that fails to produce a sincere state of contrition."<sup>40</sup> What is produced in such an instance is an archetypal Brother Jero Christian that is "a false copy, the hypocritical or theatrical self, indirectly pointing to what is behind it, to what is inner or private about a person, that which is supposedly misrepresented, as true and real."<sup>41</sup> The idea of a hypocrite in this instance gestures towards the very nature of hypocrisy itself as theatricality: In Ancient Greece, actors were called "Hyprokrites" for they were trying to be what they were not. As Augusto Boal put it, "this was intricate hypocrisy: the actor pretended to be what he was not and was what he pretended to be."<sup>42</sup>

### **Performing Pentecostalism, Pentecostalism as Performance**

In this section, I focus on the characteristics of Pentecostalism and characterize the movement as a cultural performance with distinct aesthetics that separates it from other forms of Christianity. Pentecostalism, according to its scholars, is about a rupturing that births new cultural and theological possibilities through the body. What feminist scholar, Susan Bordo refers to as the "network of practices, institutions, and technologies that sustains positions of

dominance and subordination...the mechanism that shape and proliferate, rather than repress desire, generate and focus our energies, construct our conceptions of normalcy and deviance,”<sup>43</sup> in Pentecostalism are made possible by various techniques applied on the body. To understand the Pentecostal body as a text, it is necessary to explore how spiritual techniques inspire rituals of faith that impress on the body and stamp it with an external identity. Pentecostalism treats the body as both a clean slate and a palimpsest on which new writings of spiritual norms and ethics can be inscribed.

When sociologist, Marcel Mauss, talked about “body techniques” as ways people learn to use their bodies such that certain gestures become identifiable markers of culture, he also mentioned that there are “necessarily biological means of entering into “communication with God.””<sup>44</sup> Pentecostalism understands the body as a portal or a gateway into the supernatural and therefore prescribes ethics and personal(ized) rituals that manage and discipline bodies in pursuit of both spiritual ideals and the management of the precarity of their material existence. Pentecostal practices thus turn the body into a discursive site where religious praxis becomes a repository of historical meanings, cultural significations, and political constructions of subjecthood. Pentecostal performances also generate knowledge and the body, a textual site, also becomes a mode of overwriting a society’s ethos and norms. Church historian, Ogbu Kalu asserts the primacy of the body in Pentecostal epistemology saying,

Pentecostalism represents a paradigm shift that unshackles theology from rationalistic/scientific ways of thinking and expands the understanding of the spiritual dimensions of reality and operations of the invisible worlds. It posits that there are three different ways of knowing – intellectual, observational and experiential –and accords new emphasis on the real of human experience.<sup>45</sup>

The shift to experiential knowledge highlights the centrality of the body to Pentecostal theology and praxis are expressed in the book of the Acts of Apostles where, shortly before the ascension

of Jesus Christ, he said to his disciples, *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost comes upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.* <sup>46</sup> The verse that preceded the “day of Pentecost” in the book of the Acts of Apostles is the charter that launched global Pentecostalism, a revivalist strain of the Protestant movement. This verse of scripture gives an insight into the protean and effervescent nature of Pentecostalism: the democratization of divine power privatized in individual bodies that would be dispersed throughout the earth to witness for Jesus Christ.

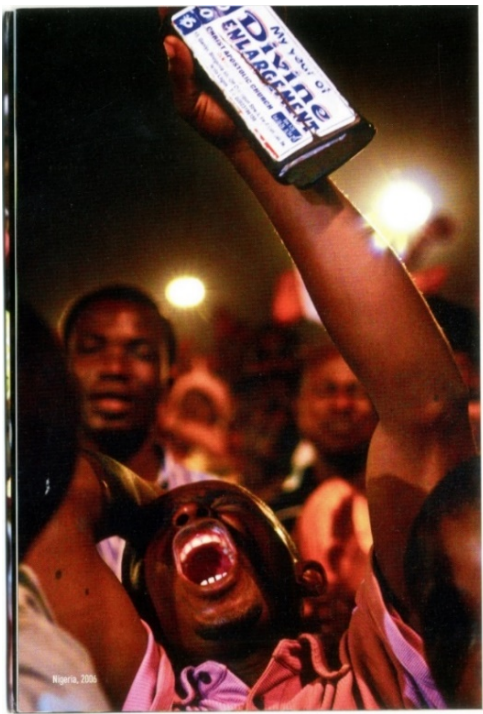


Figure 3 - Prayer

Waldo Cesar’s biblico-theological analysis of the day of Pentecost characterizes the event as a rupture that birthed new possibilities for the world through the elements of language (the

tongues of fire that settled on the Apostles) and spatial invasion (the charge to go into the world and invade Satanic or non-Christian spaces).<sup>47</sup> The third element in the mix Cesar describes should be the body, that corporeal territory that was possessed by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Each body was individually possessed with the power of the Holy Spirit but collectively they form an invading army of God, marching through time and space they capture territories for God in a most phenomenal manner. Pentecostal pastors construe the Holy Spirit as a force of power – both external and indwelling- that enables the believer to do things that range from solving mundane problems to defeating ubiquitous evil on earth.<sup>48</sup> The Holy Ghost in human bodies gingers and inspires its acts, causing the spiritual to map itself onto the physical using the body as a conduit. The Holy Ghost is central to Pentecostal belief and its workings of power on the Pentecostal Body, rather than abstract theological postulations, functions as a series of interconnected dramatic performances.<sup>49</sup>

### **Pentecostalism in Nigeria/Africa: A Literature Review**

In the past two decades, the wave of scholarship that have been studying a Nigerian and African variant of the global Pentecostal movement through the disciplinary lenses of political and social theories, history, theology and philosophy, phenomenology, and diasporization grapple with the universal and global dimensions of the movement. So dynamic is Pentecostalism that ascribing an essence to its manifestations is an elusive task. Creating a typology of Pentecostalism has been a rather difficult for scholars who have noted that its lack of

stabilized identity is due to its charisma.<sup>50</sup> Other scholars have broken down the movement into categories of classical, African independent, charismatic and neo-Pentecostals while noting the untidy overlap of each category. Brian Siegel advocated for studying the Pentecostal movement as “Pentecostalisms” rather than presuming a monolith.<sup>51</sup> For Ruth Marshall, it is much simpler to investigate Pentecostalism in all its complexity by approaching the phenomenon as “the Born-Again Movement.”<sup>52</sup> That way, scholarship can capture the essence of the movement despite its internal contradictions, doctrinal differences, and fragmentations.

In Nigeria, this task even becomes more difficult as several churches either slap themselves with the “Pentecostal” label or repudiate it based on the expediency of their experience. In my ethnographic research, I have been gently corrected by pastors of smaller and less known churches who insist that they are either “charismatic” or “independent” or “Bible-believing” or “spirit-filled” rather than “Pentecostal.” My suspicion is that since Pentecostalism has become mainstream in Nigeria and appears de-anchored from its pietistic essence, the pastors detaching themselves are trying to create a new “protested” space for themselves in the religious firmament. In addition, since certain denominations are more emphatic of certain spiritual gifts over another, the churches that accept the “Pentecostal” tag are also aligning themselves with aspects that adequately describe their practices. Despite the challenges of taxonomy, the Pentecostal theology is distinct for its phenomenological emphasis on the Holy Spirit, a personal relationship with God that begins at conversion and reception of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. They premise divine anointing as the basis of a call to ministry above theological training for formal education and the notion of anointing as legitimation is used in metaphorical and physical senses.<sup>53</sup> Their activities are mostly driven by youthful zest and energy and pastors tend to be younger and their niche often built around targeting (mostly) the young, cosmopolitan, and



upwardly mobile demographic. The specific practices and rituals of Pentecostalism such as *glossolalia* and interpretation, divine healing, Biblical authority, the new birth, exorcism or “deliverance,” prophecies, holiness, spiritual warfare, visions, dreams, trances, performance of miracle, apocalyptic visions, spiritual gifts, prosperity gospel, extra-material ways of resolving existential issues, all separate its activities from orthodox Christianity. While the range of these activities is uniform in global Christianity<sup>54</sup> and everyone “drinks from the same theological pot,”<sup>55</sup> the manifestation of African Pentecostalism is haunted by an imaginary of enchantment.<sup>56</sup> Thus, its rituals have a more dramatic texture as believers constantly war against the demonic forces that threaten their wholesome quality of life.

The war against Satan and his demonic forces that go on in Pentecostalism regularly uses the colorful language of African traditional religious and narrative imaginary where human transmutation is possible; chimeras and headless bodies (or body-less heads) mingle with humans by taking on embodied forms, and enchanted figures who step out of supernatural world to either transact activities with humans or harm them. Thus, Pentecostalism draws on the lifeblood of African traditions in two ways: one, it draws on its repertoire of embodied knowledge, practices, rituals, and beliefs about the unseen world. Equally importantly, Pentecostalism borrows the moral philosophy of abundant and fulfilling life of indigenous religions<sup>57</sup> to fashion empowerment ethics that gives Pentecostalism its currency and contemporary relevance. Two, Pentecostalism is also sustained by a constant battle with its “other,” the African traditional religions, from which it derives its zest and impetus. This tension is inevitable, as the success of Pentecostalism in non-western cultures has been based on its ability to “include and transform at least certain elements of preexisting religion which still retain a strong grip on the cultural subconscious.”<sup>58</sup> The proximity to indigenous religions results in the

fear of the dark – a metaphor that also has racial and historical implications. Dark relates to the unknowability of (mostly) African religions because of the opacity of its epistemological formations that were traditionally restricted to “cults.” Toyin Falola’s historical study of violence in Nigeria has shown how Christian narratology can lead to antagonisms and aggression in a pluralistic society such as Nigeria.<sup>59</sup>

To make up for the unknown, Pentecostalism has typically created its narratives of “occult economies” around indigenous religions and beliefs, and shapes its own rituals as the performative acts that repudiates or banish these systems of beliefs and their legacies. Pentecostalism, with its “apocalyptic imagination”<sup>60</sup> constitutes itself as the sole or defining authority with the power to cast down any other imagination that positions itself against the knowledge of God. In the Pentecostal imagination, the world of good (represented by a wholesome spirituality, victory, healing and prosperity) is ever contended by the world of evil (represented by lack of faith, sickness, chaos, disease, and poverty) and the believer is the protagonist who is ever striving in unending episodes of serialized battle against malevolent forces. Scholars such as Afe Adogame, Rosalind Hackett, Birgit Meyer and Gerrie Ter Haar, have collectively noted how the discourse of the demonic in religious imagination – the fixation of vanquishing it- provides an insight into the rationalities of worship and the congregational agenda that defines its theatrics and aesthetics.<sup>61</sup> Both Meyer and Hackett have linked Pentecostal expressions and imageries to the discourses of modernity, globalization, and its unsettling effects for postcolonial citizens. Pentecostalism is invested in fighting the battle of showdown where evil (precipitated by indigenous religions) would be banished for good and achieving this entails exorcising Africa of her demons and re-possessing her with the spirit of God. Therefore, existing knowledge and rituals of African traditions are made to confront

modern signifiers that evaluate its meanings. As Jean Commaroff and John Commaroff say, ritual innovators have long deployed familiar cultural imageries to process African history as it unfolds.<sup>62</sup>

Pentecostalism as Africa's largest and burgeoning cultural movement contrasts western societies' attempt to separate the secular from the sacred. God is alive and thriving in Africa (as well as Latin America).<sup>63</sup> The dimension Pentecostalism has taken in the global south has resulted in a wave of "Pentecost outside Pentecostalism."<sup>64</sup> The wide range of scholarly studies not only reflects how crucial this religious wave is, but they also account for its resilience. From the discipline of history to those of religious studies, diaspora and globalization, media, modernity, political philosophy, theology, narratology, urbanity, and gender and sexuality studies, Pentecostalism has become an epistemological site through which academic theories are propounded and deconstructed. As the theologian, Nimi Wariboko has noted, through Pentecostalism, we can understand Nigeria and through Nigeria itself, we can understand Pentecostalism.<sup>65</sup>

The mutual interlock of Pentecostal history and phenomenon with Nigeria arises from the orientation its religious activities promote through its army of subjects who perform their faith through their daily march on the Nigerian cultural landscape. Part of my task in this dissertation is to construe the rituals of Pentecostalism as a centripetal force that has made possible, every kind of phenomenological activity that previous studies have engaged. That is, neither the history nor the diasporization (for instance) of Nigerian Pentecostal events would have been possible without prior subjectivation of the people who constitute the body of Christ. Therefore, an exploration of Pentecostal subjectivity, or Godmentality, provides a closer picture of the embodied beliefs that go into the rituals of Pentecostalism and drives its theatrical impetus. I have grouped current

scholarship in on Nigerian/African Pentecostalism into three overlapping groups: history; phenomenological/political/theology; and the cultural performances that are produced for a Pentecostal audience (and as consequence of Pentecostal impact on the social culture). Each category emphasizes how much the vibrancy of contemporary Pentecostalism derives from the “African spiritual experience ...in which the “divine or sacred” realm interpenetrates into the daily experience of the human person so much that religion, culture, and society are imperatively interrelated.”<sup>66</sup>

The historiography of global Pentecostalism tends to assume that a genealogy of such a diverse cultural phenomenon is possible. For instance, Donald Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori specifically date the emergence of “modern-day Pentecostalism” to January 1, 1901, when the students of faith preacher, Charles F. Parham, in Bethel Bible School, Topeka, Kansas, spoke in tongues. From there, they wrote, Parham (a white man) took his message to Houston Texas when he encountered William J. Seymour, a holiness preacher (a black man) whose evangelical activities led to the Azusa street revival, an interracial gathering that was so animating it catalyzed the launching of Pentecostalism all over the world –from Africa to the Americas, to Asia over the decades.<sup>67</sup> While this North American version of Pentecostal history is circulated in Pentecostal scholarship, it has been variously itself contested for its timeline of events partly because of the races of the main characters involved. The documented history of the movement is haunted by the politics of contestation of which human race founded such a phenomenal global movement.<sup>68</sup> David Martin, a scholar of religious sociology, also studied Pentecostal phenomenon in Latin America, tracing its focal point to Methodism in the United States.<sup>69</sup> The scholarly quest for making American Pentecostalism the genealogical node from which a global culture erupted is noticeable in scholarship of Harvey Cox, Donald Dayton, and Paul Gifford as

well.<sup>70</sup> African historians of Christianity such as Kwame Bediako and Ogbu Kalu have repudiated the historiography of Pentecostalism that employs hegemonic epistemological methods of inquiry and which invariably results in presenting Africa as a prior cultural vacuity that was filled up with western cultural expressivity.<sup>71</sup> Like Kalu and Bediako, other scholars like E. Kingsley Larbi and J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu have also written on Pentecostal theology from the Ghanaian perspectives centering the history and experience of local people.<sup>72</sup>

African Pentecostalism might have profited from transnational networks during the 1980s and 1990s during her economic collapse<sup>73</sup> but that factor, according to Kalu, does not make it a mere extension of “the American electronic church.” African Pentecostalism, he contends, has its own fibrous roots that link to the history of the continent prior to and during colonization. The fact that some Africans themselves are willing to accept that Pentecostalism is an Americanization of local culture, he argues, shows how much they have forgotten their own history and constitute themselves from others’ history. Kalu’s radical approach upturns the historiography of the movement as starting from “Azusa” in California, USA, and shows - through a historical narration of discontinuities in religious beliefs- that the African Pentecostal movement is an embodiment of “Africans’ quest for power and identity through religion.”<sup>74</sup> For Africans, the appeal of the pneumatic composition of Pentecostalism feeds directly into their understanding of how power can be obtained through religions. Power, to them, “sustains the cosmos, the socio-economic and political structures...gives meaning to life’s journey from birth to death, and the sojourn in the ancestral world to reincarnated return to the human world.”<sup>75</sup>

In Nigerian Pentecostalism, the growth of Pentecostalism has a historical bent as well. Ogbu Kalu attributes the largest growth of Pentecostalism in Nigerian to between 1970 and 1995; the period where the movement experienced such sporadic growth, it became a global

phenomenon. However, he argues that the reasons and the pattern of its vertical growth were not consistent throughout these decades. For instance, in the 1970s, it was a period of the move of the Spirit of God, a time of revivalism among Christian ranks when people started exhibiting radical charisma. One of the factors that enabled the spirit of God to move was the Scripture Union, a Bible study group on campuses such as University of Ibadan and University of Ife, that began to exhibit more charismatic activity such as prayers, speaking in tongues, and one on occasion, they raised the dead. The young army of undergraduates left school, handed over to other generations while they travelled through West Africa to propagate the gospel.

This was also the era when the late Archbishop Benson Idahosa (called the father of Pentecostalism in Nigeria) dominated the airwaves with a highly spectacular form of worship and gradual introduction of the prosperity gospel.<sup>76</sup> Idahosa success can be attributed to three broad factors: his antagonisms of African traditional religions which, according to his biography, *Fire in His Bones*, he had always vehemently rejected from his youth; the transnational networks he forged with evangelical pastors such as Gordon and Freda Lindsay of the Christ For All Nations Church in Dallas, Texas, the United States; Jim Bakker of Assemblies of God and the former host of the PTL Club. Both groups generously supported Idahosa with resources and they also had the opportunity to preach to the large crowds that he commanded in Nigeria. The third factor was his pioneering use of the mass media. In his biography, one of the female church leaders returned from a trip from Lagos with a distressing report that the programs being broadcast were moral pollutants and urged Idahosa to use the medium to reach people with the gospel. This was the era when Nigeria was making unprecedented sums of money from oil resources and, at a loss with what to do with her new prosperity, began to advance money to civil servants to buy television sets. Idahosa's television ministry coincided with the time virtually

every household in Nigeria could purchase a TV and as a man of God who was able to put up spectacular effects on an emerging form of media – raising the dead, healing the sick, destroying charms and amulets of indigenous religions- he became a kind of celebrity whose fearless faith drew the crowds to him.<sup>77</sup>

In the mid-80s, when African economies began to collapse and political crises that despoiled life as people knew it, the Pentecostal movement preaches faith and prosperity. Idahosa not only preached prosperity at a time mainstream Christianity preached the gospel of the “Cross” and suffering, he displayed prosperity through his personal ostentation. He had a chain of flashy cars, dressed flamboyantly, and surrounded himself with the opulence he preached. The prosperity gospel flourished and its appeal was because it employed the language of the Bible to shape an empowerment ethic that promised economic and social redemption, far removed from religious asceticism and suffering as a form of piety. In the 90s, Pentecostalism began to angle for a return to holiness and preach political engagement as well, stimulating people to civic participation. This led to more overt pastoral relations with political and economic agents, culminating in enhanced political authority and power for pastors and church leaders.<sup>78</sup>

The theme of power and its ineluctable relationship to life in Africa is important to an understanding of African Pentecostalism. The notion of power to triumph has featured in studies such as Matthew Ojo’s historical/phenomenological study of charismatic/Pentecostal movements in Nigeria, *The End-Time Army* and Asonzeh Ukah’s *A New Paradigm of Pentecostal Power*.<sup>79</sup> Ukah singularly focuses on the ethnography of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, one of the largest Pentecostal churches in the world. His study, much like Kalu would endorse, links the genealogy of the movement to African Independent Churches and how its transition to

Pentecostalism can be attributed to the “recharismatization” by one man, the current General Overseer, Pastor Enoch Adeboye. Pastor Adeboye was a professor of Applied Mathematics at the University of Lagos but he joined the church and was central to its evolution as a modern Pentecostal church that attracts the younger generation. He relaxed some of their puritan rigidity, introduced a prosperity theology, and gradually molded an alternative society that imbued with necessary paraphernalia that enables it to function as the Nigerian state.<sup>80</sup> The church is today a megachurch with thousands of parishes all over Nigeria (the number grows daily) and in 196 countries of the world. The RCCG is a Pentecostal church that embodies the notion of power in its various dimensions: cultural, political, economic, and spiritual.

One example of the exercise of spiritual power is Pastor Adeboye’s prophecy against a military ruler, General Sani Abacha, a murderous dictator that held Nigeria under his vicious grip for five years. The 1990s were a period of uncertainty and unrest in Nigeria. There had been coups and counter-coups, and Nigerian military leaders were treated as a pariah in the international community. Economic policies fashioned by Bretton Woods Institutions served Nigeria poorly leading to strangulating economic conditions that impoverished masses of people thus making them resort to seeking spiritual solutions.<sup>81</sup> Things got worse when the acclaimed winner of the June 12, 1993, elections, Bashorun MKO Abiola, was clammed in jail by Abacha when the latter declared himself the lawful president of Nigeria. Political activists and religious leaders who dared to speak out against the government were thrown in jail and by kangaroo courts that presumed them guilty before they were even tried. Amidst all these, Pastor Adeboye (whose fame at that was not as phenomenal as it presently is) held a Holy Ghost service, a first Friday of the month regular meeting, where he told the congregation that God had told him that it was a new dawn for Nigeria. On Monday, Abacha, who had been ailing and been throwing



journalists who dared report about his failing health into jail, was suddenly announced dead. Nigerians trooped into the streets to celebrate the death of Abacha with shouts of “Praise God, we are free!” Pastor Adeboye’s fame soared and he has since been a major factor in Nigeria’s political culture. In retrospect, the confirmation of Pastor Adeboye’s prophetic function was not merely based on Abacha’s mysterious death but that Nigeria eventually began the journey to civil rule and which until now has been unbroken.<sup>82</sup> In December 2016, when I listened to the broadcast of the church’s annual convention, Pastor Adeboye repeated the story and told people to believe always in the power of God when he speaks through his prophets.

The military years finally ended in May 1999 and a democratic government began. The economy opened, and with the burgeoning of hope for a better life was the meteoric rise of the neo-Pentecostal churches like RCCG. The church prospered because their membership not only increased, but the wave of nouveau riche better economic opportunities created needed a place where they could moralize their acquisition. These churches competed for the richest and the most influential members of the society and all social classes were attracted to the churches. The poorer people joined the church because they needed God to bring them out of poverty and the richer people also joined the church so they could be seen as possessing a religious ethic. Everyone attended church because it gradually became a valuable networking site for business and social relationships. The spectacles of worship became attractive for all classes of people who needed leisure after working hard all week but can barely afford to patronize the few places of entertainment in Nigeria cities.

Churches became prosperity centers –they promised health and wealth, financial blessings for people who could barely make ends meet through prophetic declarations that promise that out of the church God would raise more billionaires, more businesspeople, more

leaders, and ultimately make his house the society's governing capital the church. As economic and political actors joined the church, the church gradually became an arena site for the display of affluence and networked power. Churches began to build hospitals, schools, university, and run businesses that range from printing to production. Buildings went up like the pyramids of Pharaoh, constructed with the labor and resources of the poor and struggling members who willingly sowed their body as seeds of faith for their miracles. Pastors began to flaunt private jets and the prosperity gospel and "power" they preached became self-authenticating. Within the Nigerian post-colonial and post-military context, Pentecostalism has provided an "alternative vision in its reconceptualization of a morally chaotic world... [and] also provides people with the means to act out this vision in their daily lives."<sup>83</sup>

The scholarship on the phenomenology/political/theology of Pentecostalism that has reviewed aspects of African fixation on power range from the ones that see Pentecostalism as an instrumentalist, functionalist, or an operationalization of faith to answer daily questions of existence in a political and social culture that offers no guarantee of quality existence. Scholars such as Birgit Meyer, Ruth Marshall, Nimi Wariboko, Ogbu Kalu, Afe Adogame, Ebenezer Obadare, Allan Anderson, Paul Gifford, Clifton Clarke, J Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, and Olufunke Adeboye have offered multiple dimensions to the performance of Pentecostalism in Africa and in the Nigerian diaspora.<sup>84</sup> Ruth Marshall, who has widely studied the coincidences of Nigerian political history and the burgeoning Pentecostal movement. She challenges the reductionism of religious otherness in Nigerian postcolonial society and opens fresh analytical spaces for the understanding of the political dimensions of Nigerian Pentecostal spirituality. The uniqueness of Pentecostal spirituality lies not just in its worship but how the movement itself serves as a form of political praxis.<sup>85</sup> The theology of African Pentecostalism, Wariboko shows

in *Nigerian Pentecostalism*, is embodied and vivacious, not a rigid intellectualist document that propounds a set of behaviors to which one must adhere. Pentecostal theology is both practical and practiced, and its relevance borne out of its continued engagement with critical issues with which believers regularly contend.<sup>86</sup> Pentecostalism reveals the spiritual and material anxieties people grapple with and its theological content and liturgical creativity reflect the desire of believers' to "explain, predict, and control" their reality.<sup>87</sup> One of the ways they try to control the future is through prayer and therefore, in African Pentecostalism,

Prayer is considered as key to shaping one's future, but the prayer for African Pentecostals is not your grandfather's fare. It is very engaged and involves a stupendous amount of energy. The Pentecostal aesthetics of prayer is an eruption of sensibilities, sensory-motor skills, practical wisdom, and deep emotions for conveying everyday felt needs to the heavens and bridging the gap between the visible and invisible realms. Prayer is oral theology, biblical texts, ritual practices, and spontaneous and heady spirituality carried by and articulated through the body. Prayer—the embodiment, display, and articulation of ideas, hopes, fears, habits, and traditions—is a key feature of African Pentecostalism.<sup>88</sup>

From discourses of apprehensions of modernity to the formation of identity in contemporary political and social context, Pentecostal studies explore the subjectivity of believers and how Pentecostalism helps religious converts fashion a modern identity separate from their historical backgrounds. The Pentecostal identity, argues Marshall, has enabled Nigerians in their postcolonial context to propound a definitive identity, not by repressing other forms of identification but by assimilating complex social and cultural formation processes and practices, subsume them all within "a collective system of representations" to manage those multiple identity forms.<sup>89</sup> The *em-powering* content of Pentecostal theology, argues Birgit Meyer, comes from a progression towards modernity where people make a break with their African communal pasts to become individualized subjects that are not beholden to either their communal culture or history. Pentecostalism insists on a complete break with the past by

constructing binaries –us/them, now/then, modern/traditional, God/devil that enables this rupture to take place.<sup>90</sup>



*Figure 4*

The validity of Meyer’s argument is reflected in how Pentecostal pastors arouse all manner of anxieties in their congregants about how their past as Africans works against their realization of their destiny. Pentecostals endlessly rebuke and banish “ancestral spirits” through prayers and as Paul Gifford says, the enchanted religious imagination of African Pentecostalism “sees spirits, demons, spiritual powers at play in all areas of life and responsible for every ill. Spirits and witchcraft were said to be responsible for illness, misery, poverty, hunger and misfortune.”<sup>91</sup> As noted by scholars such as Paul Gifford and John Parratt, the vivacity of Pentecostalism relates to its complex historical and aesthetic formations that combine Christian traditions, indigenous African traditions, and the traditions of the extant socio-political context in

which it operates.<sup>92</sup> “A biblical symbolic content with modern forms of communication and expansion. Elements of the religious revivals of the distant past are mixed with new and more dramatic problems and human experiences.”<sup>93</sup> Richard Burgess argues that,

African Pentecostalism appeals to popular religious sensibilities precisely because it resonates with the pragmatic and power-oriented nature of African indigenous spirituality, while at the same time allowing individuals to break free from the religious and social ties of the past and construct new identities for themselves.<sup>94</sup>

Churches like Mountain and Fire of Miracles and Living Spring Church have special deliverance prayers and sessions for “first born” children and “first sons” to exorcise them of demonic influence that crept into their lives when their parents or grandparents dedicated them to pagan idols that now haunt them and prevent them from achieving success in life. In Nigeria’s post-military and post-colonial context where people are fraught with angst about what the future holds for them in a modern globalizing world, Pentecostalism alleviates their fears by urging a renunciation of a dark unproductive African past and an embrace of the modernistic promises Pentecostal Christianity holds. The raw material with which Pentecostalism shapes its imaginary come from the African culture and history it encourages its adherents to repudiate. Since the memory of “the past” is also embodied and it produced acts of forms of cultural behavior, it is impossible for the believer to make the kind of break Pentecostalism urges. The tactic, therefore, has been selectivity of that cultural memory, making it the foundational soil on which they sow seeds of Judeo-Christian tradition culture and history that produce the Bible to fashion a reality that helps them through anxieties of modern society. The Bible and African imaginary are brought together in a contest staged by the Pentecostal believer who mixes and matches narratives to script a history that will decide his/her future. While Rosalind Hackett has argued that using ideas of witchcraft agency in African religions to resolve anxieties of urbanity and

modernity has an intellectual bent,<sup>95</sup> I also see the invention of an imaginary that gives people the language to create and sustain their religious ritual activity but which relies on their constant performance of the imagery to maintain it.

For instance, in summer 2014, when I spoke to a pastor in Living Spring Church about their special services for “First Borns and First Sons” I engaged him based on my own understanding of the mythical significance of being a first child or first son in Yoruba culture.<sup>96</sup> They are believed to be the ones who “open the womb” and are typically dedicated to household gods with prayers that their backs may be soft (meaning they would be accompanied by other children) and that they succeed in life. The pastor’s explanation, however, took off from the Bible. He referred me to passages in the Old Testament one of which was the 10<sup>th</sup> plague God visited on the Egyptians where He destroyed all the first-born children – of human and animals- thereby compelling Pharaoh to release the enslaved Egyptians. He listed other biblical passages about firstborns and then went on to explain how important the “firstborn” was in Hebrew culture; how they –as Christians- are predestinated to conform to the image of God’s firstborn, Jesus Christ. He also told me that the first child or the first son is a source of parents’ pride and is usually the first target of malevolent forces. First sons, he said, are in a more precarious position because they uphold the lineage and the ancestral spirits that still linger around after the family had stopped worshipping them tend to afflict these sons to shame the entire family. The bulk of the explanation might have been linked to the Bible but the foundation had strong resonance with the indigenous imagination about ancestral gods, the myth of reincarnation and the continuity of the seen and unseen worlds where the dead, living, and the unborn, are able to move through them in a cycle of transitions.

Precisely because the African traditional religion provides the repertoire of resources that fuel the Pentecostal imagination, scholars of African Pentecostalism enjoin that study of the Pentecostal movement started from its history of indigenous religions. According to Kalu, African Pentecostalism,

...has a certain uniqueness that could be understood from its fit in the African primal worldview. It is a strand in the element of continuity between African traditional religion and Christianity. Its problematics and idioms are sourced from the interior of African spirituality, and the resolutions are a reconstruction of that source from Christian and biblical perspectives. This gives the end product its peculiarity.<sup>97</sup>

Clifton Clarke, to capture the primal origins of African Pentecostalism, articulated a theoretical method of “call and response” as an epistemological tool for divining African Pentecostalism.

“Call and Response” a motif of performance participation in African culture and Clarke defines call and response as, “an ongoing dialectic between the Holy Spirit (the call) and the existential experience of the African people (the response).”<sup>98</sup> In the universes of the African, “call and response is the characteristic epistemological mode...in which everything is interconnected.”

Clarke argues that a distinct African method of investigating her theology, considering the continent’s historical move towards Christianity, will undermine the over-privileging of western history and methods in global Pentecostal studies. This mode of approach, he argues, imbibes the contradictions of Pentecostal history, its fixation on the unseen, the transcendent, the imminent, and African Pentecostals’ pneumatological attributes. He describes the call as “the authoritative source, the foundation that is laid on which the response is premised. In African traditional context, the sound of the drums reverberates across the village or the city demanding a response from the people.” The “call” metaphor, he argues, are captured in three elements: the Bible as an authoritative source, church history, and religious cultural context of African Pentecostalism. On

the other hand, the “response” illustrates the participatory and experiential aspects of African Pentecostalism and the way its habits are embodied and subsumed into people’s way of life.

The “response,” on the other hand, is the dynamic and dialogical reaction that manifests itself through song, dance, ecstasy, and prayer. The response is the existential outworking that seeks to make sense of the transcendent “other” that confronts the African Pentecostal through the ancestral voices of the biblical patriarchs or even the legacy of their own African fathers.<sup>99</sup>

This brings me to the third category of scholarship on African Pentecostalism: cultural productions that propagate the values that Pentecostalism proclaims. These are the capitalist enterprises that revolve around music, video, publishing technology, media, and manufacturing. These industries include transport business, food and hygiene industries, telecommunications, building, education, and import and export business. Pentecostal culture has affected urban aesthetics and planning and boosted economic enterprises that thrive due to church activities. Pentecostalism has also greatly influenced the entirety of Nigerian culture and its virtual colonization of the media has enabled its cultural activities to dramatize moral and religious offenses. They have promoted ideas around occult powers, spectral forces, collapse of time and space, sin and punishment, sex and perversion, women’s bodies, women’s social roles in the public and private realms, myths about spiritual spouses, prosperity ethic and neo-liberal values, plus an understanding of supernatural power and what it requires of the viewing audience.<sup>100</sup> The innate characteristics of Pentecostal Christianity to rupture traditions has made it easy for its African strain to adapt to oral and embodied cultural forms and translate the resulting vitality to all modern media formats.

Due to its skillful and (neo)liberal use of the electronic media, Pentecostalism is hypervisible in Nigerian and African societies.<sup>101</sup> Such a pervasive quality of Pentecostal culture has resulted in the impregnation of social culture with its values, languages, ethos, worldview,



and significantly shaped behavior of both Christians and non-Christians as well. On one side, Pentecostalism has opened a

...practice of religion (that) has shifted from reverence to God to fear and terror, and from adoration to pacification. This is evident in Pentecostal emphasis on bondage as a result of the sin of commission and omission, which is further fueled by Nigerian home video that has filled the whole scenario with films confirming God's wrath or gods as the causative of misfortune, illness, and poverty.<sup>102</sup>

On the other side, however, Pentecostalism also provides a way for people to make sense of their material conditions by seeking spiritual solutions, and in their daily behavior, perform ethics that enable them to triumph over those conditions. This process is not without aesthetic pleasure, an aspect that is not frequently talked about in the Pentecostal culture. When Pentecostalism is treated as a sensational cultural performance and involves the use of bodies and the production of effects, we cannot evade the questions of entertainment pleasure or what the congregation –as an audience, active spectators and participants- make of their experience.

### **Tau(gh)t Bodies and the Joys of Subjectivity**

To reflect the immediacy, viserality, and perceptible materiality of the effects of ritual worship, it is helpful to refer to the body as “flesh.”<sup>103</sup> Both Byran Turner and Mayra Rivera suggests that lingering religious influences on academic discourses make “body” rather than “flesh” the discursive category. “Flesh” shows up instead when we talk about creativity, *Eros*, suffering, lust, sin, death, pain, desire, carnality, punishment, vulnerability, and perishability. According to Turner, in Western history, the unruliness and treats the body as flesh or materiality portends to authority resulted in an obsession with controlling the body.<sup>104</sup> Rivera says,

The body names the physicality of human existence. It is invoked as a solution to the devaluation of flesh and materiality and yet “the body” is also described as an effect of the arrangement of power, an artifact produced for social control. It is

described as “natural” yet shaped by social processes and representations – biological and ideological. Both flesh and not.<sup>105</sup>

Their moving the discursive category of “body” to flesh evokes a more haptic and materialist feel, thus encouraging one to think of the Pentecostal body in terms of the sensual consequences of disciplinary techniques applied on the body to make it into a taught, or a taut body. The idea of applying pedagogical techniques on the Pentecostal body is to “improve” it and making it conform to the social order. In *Taught Bodies*, Clare O’ Farrel et al explore the essence of taught bodies as one that strives to structure the social order and maintain norms in all aspects of social behavior. Through formal and informal training, the social body is produced by different techniques that improve it and make it conform to standards of social behavior.<sup>106</sup> Both Marcel Mauss and Asad Talal say that bodies are teachable and can be oriented towards a mode of being through teaching, imitation, or drawing from a cultural repertoire of actions until the learned actions become a habit.<sup>107</sup>

While these scholars that argue about “*self-developable* means of achieving of a range of human object(ive)s”<sup>108</sup> on the body, and the many ways the ends serve social and political agendas, there is still a need to investigate the sensual state of the body that conforms to these practices and performs its subjectivity. For the make-belief of Pentecostalism, the sensuality is the derivation of pleasure; Pentecostalism would not be as vivacious as it is without the concomitant effect of the pleasure of subjectivity. Works on religious worship that engages its creative practices sometimes overlook the critical concern of how the process of performing worship itself is a means to the inscription of primal pleasure.<sup>109</sup> The disciplinary activity that trains the body and makes it conform to subjectivity is possible only because the human flesh has physiological and psychological cravings of sensual gratifications. The Bible frequently warns

believers about giving in to desires of the flesh but instead, to pursue spiritual delights, which only comes from self-discipline and self-abnegation. Anthropologist, Birgit Meyer, has done quite some work on religious sensation and its mode of productions, arguing that the Pentecostal mode of inducing sensationalist experience in worship plays a central role in the formation of subjectivity.<sup>110</sup> She states that,

Without the particular social structures, sensory regimes, bodily techniques, doctrines and practices that make up a religion, the searching individual craving for the experience of God would not exist. Likewise, religious feelings are not just there but are made possible and reproducible by certain modes of inducing experiences of the transcendental.<sup>111</sup>

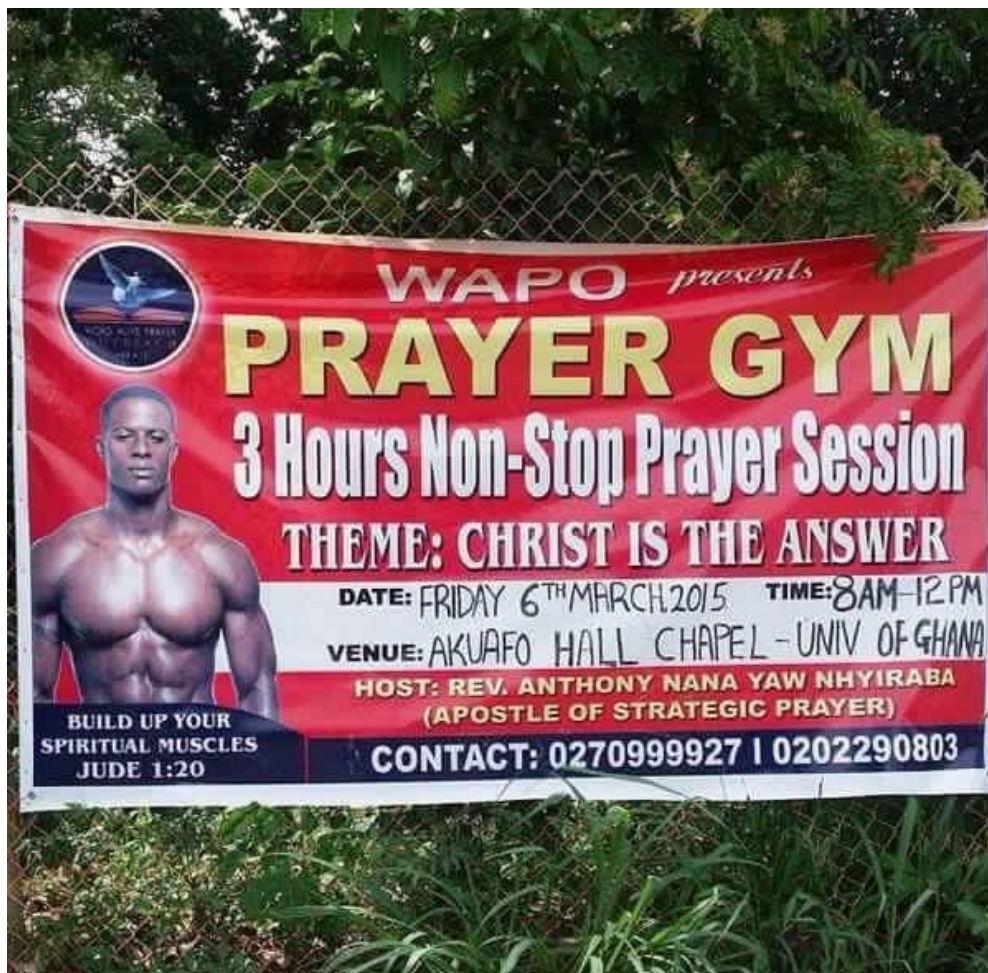


Figure 5 – The notion of spiritual exercise sometimes takes literal forms.

The “tautness” of the body on which the *taught* disciplinary techniques of Pentecostal practice have been applied is made possible through pleasure as both means and ends of Godmentality. The body is “the vessel for the experience of pleasure, the affirmation of presence and of participation in cultural representations that depend upon this pleasure.”<sup>112</sup> Pleasure, in this context, should not necessarily be associated with its carnal accomplice – *Eros*- but anchored to feelings of satisfaction and gratification that comes from engaging in what Foucault describes as “technologies of the self....” That is, the self-on self-techniques aspect of governmentality that captures how people, “by their own means or with the help of others, acted on their bodies, souls, thoughts, conduct, way of being in order to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.”<sup>113</sup> The production of pleasure in Pentecostalism pertains to the worshipper who finds it both stimulating and fulfilling, and his/her aroused appetite will continue to warrant the spectacles of production, popularity, and modes of consumption.

If the body is a “potentiality” that requires certain ethics to be “made” into a born-again subject,<sup>114</sup> and, as Meyer argues, worship is *sensational* – in the sense of both *appealing to the senses* and *spectacular*- then here lies the congruence of Pentecostalism with theatre and performance: the body performing routines of faith and the pleasure the self (as its own audience) derive from such practices. The convergence has long been explored in academic studies. For instance, Chukwuma Okoye’s study of the worship services of Nigeria Pentecostal church, Christ Embassy, submits that the pastor, Chris Oyakhilome, willfully deploy stagecraft and performance techniques in his sermon delivery. By looking at how the pastor uses his body on the altar, Okoye credits Pastor Chris’ pulpit success to his theatrical skills. Todd Johnson and Dale Savidge’s study of theatre and theology make a bold claim about the imbrication of theatre

and religion: that since theology is about knowing God and his imbuelement of himself into humanity, no other art form uniquely reflects God and humanity more than theatre. Johnson and Savidge focus on Christian theology and western theatre (and mostly in its formalist sense) but they also observed that church worship is a dramatic event. Just like the duo, Meyer also shows that the Pentecostalism's use of strong sensational appeal in their music and oratory urges worshippers to sense the Holy Spirit *with* and *in* their bodies wherever they are and to act on such feelings.<sup>115</sup> These writers provide the grounds for making a case for why theology itself is embodied and performative. This is because,

In worship, prayer, spiritual warfare, or the mundane goings-on of life, she tries to create herself as a work of art, a "flesh" disciplined and governed to yield to the demands of its morally superior spirit. Insofar as the self is always cohesion of body and spirit, acting and living well is in itself an end; the self is both its own means and end. Let us not forget that it is the body, the flesh that is working on itself; it is its practices that are transforming itself, ever engaged in the praxis, the actual being and doings of subjectivization. Spiritual life is a matter of reducing, if not eliminating, the weaknesses and desires of the flesh from the properly born-again life, which is incompatible with it and making its techniques of the self-on-the-self rendered possible.<sup>116</sup>

The entire essence of theatre and performance revolves around the body: what it does and what it says by doing what it does, and how these came to be. Also, African Pentecostal, says Wariboko, is... the use of the body, nothing... results apart from the use of the body to satisfy the necessities of life."<sup>117</sup> Both the sphere of theatre and Pentecostalism are not only about embodiment, both requires the discipline and training of the body to *will it to perform* in such a way that achieves ends. Simon Shepard's study of theatrical bodies argues that the pre-theatre body is already produced by culture and history but because the theatre has its own standards for the bodies it exhibits, it subjects the body to certain techniques that further produces the body. For Shepard, some of these techniques of disciplining the body and making it conform to

theatrical standards include written texts and scripts. Theatre, he says, requires “special things of bodies, and manipulates pleasure in relation to bodies. Through this pleasure, it engages those values which are held personally and culturally.”<sup>118</sup> For Pentecostal Christianity, such modes of discipline involve prayer, the diligent study of the Bible, and the corporeal modes of engagement in public practices and private rituals.

In chapters two to four of this dissertation, I shall be looking at the various components of Godmentality: the internal content of Pentecostal spiritual and how it is expressed through the rituals of worship; how they perform their subjectivity in public and in private; why they worship the way they do and the various creativity of worship rituals; their ideas and engagement of supernatural forces and how it engenders their nano behavior, the molecularized and entrenched habits of day to day. This range of practices will illustrate the acquisition of “Godmentality” and the pleasures of multiple forms of gratifications become an embodied and performative theology. The practices and rituals I am exploring are religious ritual activities that not only carried out for spiritual or material gains but they, in fact, also provide multiple forms of pleasure to participants. The pleasure of being a subject of God entangles other forms of pleasures such as participation in spectacular, sensual and emotionalism of worship. Worship can be entertaining and worshippers experience catharsis from engaging in aspects of Pentecostal rituals such as singing, dancing, listening to sermons, and other forms of narratives shared by people.

In chapter two, I examine the concept of the Widow Morality as a form of radical self-effacement people perform when they need divine intervention. This self-effacement requires an ostentatious display of humility before God to achieve. When they have their victory, they retain the humility and offer their victory to God. From the rather perverse pleasure of being humbled and humiliated, brokenness and pain ultimately leading to a lifting up. In this chapter, I also note

that such performance of anti-hubris has influenced popular culture and when they spectacularly beam the “it is God” morality to the public, the church finds it attractive and co-opts it back through in-church performances. Thus, the lines between sacred and secular in Nigeria are never quite clear.

In chapter three, I look at the Bible or the Word of God as means of Pentecostal engagement of supernatural forces and the belief systems that sustain those forces. People construe themselves as a major fighter within a complex cosmological narrative and the church is one of the spaces where this fantasy plays out. The other space is everywhere in the public the Pentecostal goes through in their daily performance of living. By considering themselves as warriors in a supernatural battle, the Pentecostal life becomes iterations of defeating Satan and the mimeticism of victory. In this chapter, I also look at language in its illocutionary and perlocutionary forms and argue that Pentecostal delight in controlling time and space using their creative imagination to build narratives of domination over antagonistic forces. The empowering nature of Pentecostalism enable people to take charge of their life, redefine it and change the narrative to what they desire; the pleasure of creating new meanings and rejections of the old order. These pleasures are made possible by the pleasure the body derives from self-discipline and self-regulation, reshaping the body and transacting faith in exchange for material and spiritual rewards. The Pentecostal identity also means that people experience the pleasures of belonging to a group marked by its investment in Biblical history and culture; the pleasure of permeating the public sphere with the ethos of your culture and having access to sources of power; the pleasure of using language, semiotics, vocabulary as means of identity, social belonging, and as social security.

In chapter four, I consider the surveillance of the Pentecostal body by human and superhuman forces as a guarantee of one's being. I note that each of the surveillance forms engenders different kinds of acts by the Pentecostals to themselves and to those whom they consider "others." Despite the religious aspect of pleasure generation, I also note that there is also the contradictory aspect of the pleasure of self-stealing, duplicity, and hypocrisy. When people put up a front that bespeaks asceticism and righteousness and acts otherwise privately, they derive a pleasure from performing a persona that is separate from whom they are. In the final chapter, I will discuss the "failings" of Godmentality to produce a perfect sinless human who matches the recreated being Pentecostal preacher often urges people to aspire to be. That Godmentality has limits shows that conditioning a human being to conformity does make them into mechanized objects that lack any kind of agency.

### **Significance of Study**

This study contributes to both the disciplines of theatre and religion by exploring the making of the Pentecostal religious body, Pentecostalism as a performance, and the performance of Pentecostalism. Pentecostal studies have focused on the dimensions of phenomenology and history, without much accounting for the process by which the bodies that form the army of God come to become subjects and how we can understand the contents of their subjective composition. This dissertation created Godmentality as a critical concept to capture the nuances of faith, and the rituals through which people affirm their beliefs, and how performing those rituals creates their particularity of their moral subjectivity. This exploration of subjectified bodies in Pentecostal movement is a timely study because it looks to, not the *what* of Pentecostal movement but the *how*. Through an analysis of the embodied performances, this study analyzes



how Pentecostals rituals become epistemology and how the performance of Pentecostalism become authoritative acts that affect the social and cultural context in which believers lives. Besides, Godmentality also provides a framework for talking about the aesthetic and political formation of Pentecostal bodies without resorting to prejudicial terms such as mere “religiosity” or “brainwashing.”

Throughout this dissertation, I lay out the theoretical framework for the making of the Pentecostal subject; how the “made” subject makes the society and how the society, in turn, remakes the subject. This constant cycle of fashioning is not a merely continuous one; it is strongly contended by other reactionary forces such as Islam and in fact, other Christian denominations. The present Nigerian culture, hemmed in on all sides by various inter and intra religious expressions, is thus a viable site for various political conflicts and power struggles. Thus, religious subjectivity is political and the Pauline charge of “casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ”<sup>119</sup> does not stop at the level of abstraction the Apostle listed. The weapons of the Christian warfare might not be carnal, but the opponents it viciously battles are either embodied forces or they are believed to be capable of taking up embodied forms. The Pentecostal unease with the agency of an “other” body inhabited by forces that are not yet brought into “the obedience of Christ” activates frequent religious showdowns in Nigeria social sphere.

Pentecostalism continues to expand in vertical and horizontal directions: one is the church’s spectacular acquisition and occupation of spaces in urban centers and spaces deemed “modern.” Two, they acquire a network of spaces that are labeled “demonic” and sacralize them. In effect, the Pentecostal expansion creates “new topographies of inequality, violence, and

exclusion through the obligation to identify and eliminate the “enemy” as well as the spectacularization and phantasmagorical enchantment so critical to its success.”<sup>120</sup> They display aggression in their “takeover” of places and spaces for God, striving to edge out religious competitors such as the equally dominant Islam and contending with cultural competitors by making the church an all-around space that provides every resources from education to health to banking facilities to entertainment pleasure, to culture and virtually everything else that would discourage their adherents from seeking these services in spaces they have not sanctioned.

In Nigeria, it is not unusual that factories, cinema house, and businesses that have wound down have had their buildings taken over by a widening church industry that now creates some of those businesses or other ones to replace what has been lost. Alternatively, their congregation members create businesses and put on them labels that signal to other Christians both within and outside their church network that these enterprises belong to a Christian. Their approach mostly sometimes appears combative but when viewed against the Pentecostal mission of “making a disciple of all nations,” their practices of overwriting public ethos with Pentecostal character become understandable. Through the lens of performance studies, we can look through the activities of Pentecostalism to gauge its creativity and its charismatic disruption of the “normal.” Throughout this dissertation, I will breakdown Pentecostal disciplinary practices as both performative acts and as theatrical activities that in addition to spiritual benefits, shapes the environment that fosters the ethics of upward mobility, self-improvement, and identity.

The question of identity and performance is equally significant because religion in Nigeria deploys a strategic and pragmatic means of capturing and retaining power in all its manifest forms. One of the ways it achieves this is by latching on to partisan democratic politics to propel its supersessionist mission of extending its territory and domains. The contrarian

forces it overruns in the process can be either intra- or inter-religious and the subsequent reaction and counter-reactions makes the public space a raucous site. Nigeria frequently brims with latent tensions as different religious groups seek to carve spaces for themselves, impose their rules and ethics, and monopolize spaces where their subjects occupy.

### **Methodology**

This research employed ethnographic methods, close readings, interviews through physical and virtual media, historical analyses, and prior personal knowledge of Pentecostal rituals. The personal angle is important to me because the inspiration behind this research began with me searching for answers from the Pentecostal place I had once inhabited and departed from about a decade ago. My journey into Pentecostalism started in June 1998 when I told my mother I had had a troubling dream and she asked me to come with her to a Pentecostal church, Living Faith Church, Ibadan, she had been attending since March that year. I was a bit skeptical at first considering that within the six years she divorced my father we had been to a variety of churches, seeking solutions to our perennial problems: the angst that percolated the entire nation that had been held down by military dictators; the economic situation that had turned us into refugees in our own country; spiritual attacks from family members; and the certain feeling of uncertainty and helplessness that filled us with despair. In those churches – from the African Independent to charismatic ones founded by pastors and prophets whose calling was anchored on their ability to see visions- we had had a variety of experiences some of which were unpalatable and unbecoming of a church.

Then someone had invited my mother to Living Faith Church (aka Winners' Chapel) and from the very first day, she was hooked. She told me that she had been impressed by the coordination of their church services, the discipline of their services (they stuck to two hours of worship as indicated on their promotional material) and the intellectualism of the pastor whose hermeneutical skills made her see the Bible in a different way. I joined the church and saw why she loved it – they seem coordinated, they had a lot of middle-class folks and highly educated people, and their church service was highly remarkable for its discipline despite its vivacity. That day began my journey into Pentecostalism and for the next decade, my life was suffused with religious activities. As an undergraduate, my collegial life consisted of primarily church activities and academic work was merely an appendage. I was such a committed member the campus fellowship made me a pastor right in my first year and I would spend so many productive years of my life working in the church until sometime around 2011 when my life changed because of a series of events that dissociated me from the church. I have narrated this personal account to show that my life up until this point has been deeply invested in Pentecostalism and this dissertation, in some ways, is a backward glance over the road that brought me to this point.

Although my past experiences gave me insights into the *how* and *why* of Pentecostal ritual practices I have not solely relied on my experience to write this dissertation. My journey started by outlining the megachurches with which I was most familiar because I was a part of their congregation and I understand their doctrines and practices. I listed both The Redeemed Christian Church of God and Winners' Chapel in this respect, with the intention of supplementing efforts with whatever material I could gather from other churches where I had friends and relatives. I was not unmindful of the differences in the two churches: while RCCG

was a charismatic evolution of the older African Independent Church and therefore focuses on the holiness ethics to overcome in the daily walk of faith, Winners Chapel is unabashedly a “prosperity gospel” church. Acknowledgment of these differences matter because they are reflected in the demographics of those who join them and the way they structure their expectations and desires.

In Nigeria, however, I did not anticipate the level of bureaucratic constraints I would run into and which would force me to re-evaluate my plans. I was to stay in Nigeria for six weeks in summer 2015 and after two weeks of persistently traveling to headquarters of the RCCG to see if my letter of introduction had reached the right place, I realized I was in for a long journey. I called a friend who still attended Winners’ Chapel and asked her to introduce me to the upper echelon of their church administration. That move proved most useful because I met Deacon Emmanuel Odu whose generosity and interest in my work did not only help this dissertation but also provided other materials for other research outside this dissertation. Deacon put me in his car and drove me to places around the expansive grounds of Faith Tabernacle in Sango Otta, Ogun state, which I would not have been able to cover on foot. An administrative staff himself, he took me various offices to meet the dedicated and hardworking people whose activities kept the engine of the church running day after day. I greatly profited from conversations with him because he provided valuable insights into church administration and the much-needed access to places where I would not have been able to enter on my own. Due to the distance between Otta and Ibadan where I was staying, and the hassle of frequent traveling between both places, I stuck to working with Winners’ Chapel and only attended the RCCG annual summer convention in August 2015 which lasted a week.

The Redeemed Christian Church of God is the largest congregation of Christians in Africa.<sup>121</sup> Their annual conventions –in August and December- typically attracts a horde of people from all over the country and internationally too. They also hold monthly conventions every first Friday of the month, an activity that creates unease for Nigerians due to inadequate public infrastructure and inefficient traffic management abilities of agencies. Nigerians, over the years, have learned to plan their lives around RCCG monthly conventions and the monstrous traffic congestion caused by RCCG programs. Throughout the convention week in 2015, I had to shuttle between the Redemption Camp and Ibadan daily because of my daughter, Athena, who was only six months old then and needed me to be with her. In between vigils in the Camp and Ibadan, I spoke to people identifying myself as a researcher trying to understand faith and miracles and some were responsive; others were not, but most were guarded in their responses. Whenever I was in Ibadan, I spoke to people in informal or semi-structured interviews on various subjects on their Pentecostal faith. I typically ask them to tell me the most significant thing that ever happened to them as a Christian and how it did. The question was meant to be an icebreaker but I soon found that narratology is a significant part of performing the Pentecostal identity and asking people certain questions is a backdoor of sorts towards getting to understand their understanding of their faith. Sometimes I started (or joined) a conversation with people on a bus as we left the church and purposefully directed issues to areas that interested me. Those moments were useful to understand religious psychology but they were hard to document or present as evidence without a background knowledge of those respondents. In all those instances, I wrote my reflections on them and listed them as means by which I came to understand Pentecostals more and more.

Overall, I gathered materials anywhere I could find them: narratives, discussions, gossip, including “I don’t want this on record” accounts, and some deeply reflective intellectual

conversations with Pentecostals who proved rather critical of their faith even as they affirm their loyalty to Christ. The location where I was in Ibadan also proved useful because there was a Mountain of Fire and Miracles church close to the house where I lived so I simply joined some of their services. Because this was not my customary church, they frequently had problems with me. The first time I went to church, they barred me from entering because I was a female wearing trousers. Another time, to attend a deliverance service, I was asked to cut my “dada” hair! When I noticed that some of the women I was interacting with changed their attitude towards me when I talked about being married with a child, I put forward my family more. I incorporated this church into my research simply because it was convenient for me due to its proximity to my house but later, I found that their doctrines and faith practices were a useful source of Pentecostal epistemology. MFM is a “prayer” church and on their signboards, they claim they pray “ceaselessly” and wage (spiritual) wars with prayers. In this wise, they are different from other Nigerian Pentecostal churches that affirm the supremacy of the Bible or use activities such as dance as spiritual weapons (for instance). The MFM emphasis on prayer has been their own charismatic contributions to Nigerian Pentecostalism and their tons of printed and electronic material cannot illustrate this enough. As one of the pastors I spoke to in MFM told me, “Pastors from churches like Redeemed (RCCG) go to their churches during the day to listen to their pastors talk but when they need *real power* (at this point, he bunches his fist and raises it) for *real* solution, they come here (to MFM.)”



*Figure 6 - Redemption Camp summer 2015 convention*

By the time I left Nigeria in August 2015, I had accumulated what I thought was a lot of hefty haul of materials but by the time I started writing the dissertation, I found I ran short a number of times. I would go over my notes and scribbings and bang my head on the wall for not asking a follow—up question to what now seemed like a major idea but which did not occur to me at the time of the interview. To make up what I had lost, I concentrated on visiting internet spots where Nigerians gather to talk about their faith. Now and then, I hit a gem in the ongoing conversation and I send an “inbox” message to the speaker asking for interviews. Sometimes I get a response. Sometimes, it turns out that people had not reflected on their faith even though they were dedicated church members and therefore, they told me they found my questions “too hard.” In one instance, I asked my brother to follow up a story. I took him through what he



should listen for, how to ask questions, and how to observe. He had limited success because he admitted to me, the pastor intimidated him with the way he interacted with him.

To boost my understanding of theology, I also listened to sermons every Sunday. I either live stream churches or watch the recorded sermons posted on the churches' social media pages. I have also incorporated the churches' internet archive materials into this work. Some of those materials include prayer points, testimonies, or just daily devotional sermons. I watched hours of YouTube videos (especially by pastor Chris Oyakhilome of Christ Embassy church) to reignite some of my understanding of Pentecostal principles. I did not rely on memory and understanding alone, I also consulted friends who are still practicing the faith to gauge how well I have interpreted the ideas. I have supplemented the text with pictures from three sources, all of them duly cited: one, internet sources; two, personal collection; and three, photographs from the exhibition staged by Andrew Esiebo and Annalisa Buttici pictures in 2012 (see appendix D). The subsequent book publication from the exhibition was titled, *Na God: Aesthetics of African Charismatic Power* although I took only one scanned image from the book and the rest of the gallery of the exhibition website. They say a picture speaks a thousand words but in the case of these images, they not also speak to my work directly and I have employed them to spice my work. I have conjoined all these approaches with my fieldwork to give me a wider range of materials to work with throughout. I have included all these categories of materials along with my fieldwork first, because, I did not have enough resources to stay in Nigeria for as long as I would have wished (and staying at home with relatives was hugely distracting). Two, the adjustments I had to make to my ethnography also helped me see how much Pentecostal habits had become diffused into various aspects of Nigerian culture. There are no central sites

to be visited to understand Pentecostalism, every Pentecostal Christian is a walking church; they embody their faith and live it out in their daily activities.

As currently a non-practicing Christian who has continuously tottered between both atheism and agnosticism, I was initially skeptical about returning to Nigeria to investigate faith practices that I had dissociated myself from a while ago. I did not want to have to deal with former colleagues who I knew who took my “backslidden” state personally neither did I want my criticisms of the Pentecostal church and its effects on Nigerian culture in my weekly column to impede my research. Managing these conflicts was tough for me because on the one hand, I needed my former colleagues and the other hand, working with them would muddle the field for me when they introduce other kinds of issues I would rather not deal with. Throughout the time I was in Nigeria, I acutely felt my separation from the community and the rites of worship during the many church services I attended. Unlike previous times when I was a member, I did not feel the urge to stand and shout or scream “hallelujah” when the pastor required it. I was self-controlled, and mindful of my impostor state throughout. The ethnographer, Joni L. Jones, stated this feeling of dissonance that results from a belonging, yet non-belonging with the people in the ethnographic field:

I was deeply aware of the ways that my African Americanness at times converged with Yoruba realities and at other times sharply veered away from them. While in Nigeria, I felt simultaneously foreign and indigenous, welcome and invisible, comfortable and utterly disoriented.<sup>122</sup>

Indeed, there were times I felt a sense of belonging and there were times I could simply not “flow” with the rest of the church. Some ideas being preached seemed too simplistic for my academic mind; some were too radical and could not find a place in my liberal mind. Once, while I was in MFM waiting for a service to start, one of the women I was friendly with asked

me if I had considered cutting my dreadlocks because it might be infested with evil spirits. I had endured hours of some of what might be considered ludicrous fantasies of evil spirits during their services but her concerns about my hair irritated me in a way I could not readily describe.

My worst fears about returning to church came one morning to be when I met a former church colleague, Sister Bunmi, when I was leaving Sunday service at Winners Chapel's main headquarters, Canaanland, with my daughter and brother who had accompanied me. When she saw me, she screamed so loud everyone around turned to look at us. She rushed at me and soon began to cry, "Praise God! Praise God! I prayed for this day to happen. I told God to bring you back to His house and here you are! I knew you would repent and be back! Praise God." I was tongue-tied, too perplexed to tell her the truth – that my return had nothing to do with God convicting me and that those who thought my leaving the church was temporary, that when I had serious problems, I would retrace my steps to God were still wrong. Another challenge I had was the way people responded to me as a non-Christian. Whenever I introduced myself as a researcher to those who did not know me, the question that inevitably followed was if I was born-again and I knew Jesus as my Lord and Savior. If I said yes, then they wondered what the point of my questions was since I already knew what the faith was all about. If I said no, all their answers afterward would be channeled towards recruiting me to their church fold. Nevertheless, I listened to their testimonies and their urgings of what God would do for me –as he had done for them- if I would give my life to Christ. Somehow, every one of those conversations seems oddly familiar. Some years ago, I would probably have been on the same side. In the dialogue of "call and response" that wrote this dissertation, my past kept calling and making its voice heard into my present and by responding with this dissertation, it continues to walk with me to the future.

Overall, I have allowed myself to be flexible enough to collect ideas wherever and whenever I found them both because of logistics and, as I found when I started, Pentecostalism itself is about adaptability; the ability to suit itself to prevailing contexts and recalibrate its theology as and when necessary. Inherent in the practice of Pentecostal faith is that *protestant* ethic, the stubborn insistent to fit itself into the world without minding orthodoxy.

Pentecostalism constantly erupts to find multiple paths –both the little and the major one- for the Holy Spirit to penetrate until it gradually takes over the entire landscape. Today, Pentecostalism is a global phenomenon and Africans –due to their population- play a huge part in the exponential growth of this movement. Nigeria alone contributes to the global movement through both its local churches and its diaspora churches that are being planted by missionaries sent all over the world. The Forbes list of 10 richest pastors in the world has the names of five Nigerian Pentecostal pastors. As at 2011, the Pew center estimates that Pentecostals and charismatics form 28 percent of world Christian population. Pentecostals in Africa are the largest bulk Pentecostals in the whole world – they are 44 percent of the global figure and they keep expanding as they respond to the call, in whatever form it is made. The best thing about their response is that it has been flexible, capricious enough to engage the world in its changing forms, and that has made all the difference.

## Chapter Two:

### The Widow Morality and Pentecostal Anti-Hubris

*Even as a local government, I used to attend Shiloh (the church's annual convention) and sleep for days on the floor seeking the face of God – Testimony shared by a brother who attends Winners' Chapel*



Figure 7 – Worship at the Redemption Camp by the choristers

This chapter explores anti-hubris as a philosophy of Pentecostal religious culture that necessitates a radical self-effacement on the part of believers. This anti-hubristic attitude features in performances that take place in/ out of the church through techniques of discipline with which individual believers regulate themselves and perform their status as God's subjects. Anti-hubris also manifests in rather benign forms in aspects of popular culture as a sonic echo of values that

Pentecostals imbue social culture with they perform their identity. The example of anti-hubris that operates in church performances can be found in the underlying idea in the epigraph above. The quote was extracted from the testimony of a brother, a successful businessman, and a grandfather in his 60s. The longer version of the testimony details his sickness and how his search for the cure took him on a journey through four countries on three continents. He variously alternated between Western medicine and Eastern alternative therapy until he finally found healing in Winners' Chapel in Nigeria. In the testimony he shared with me, he alluded to the Pentecostal anti-hubris by telling the audience how he, a man who occupied the position of a local government chairman (equivalent of a small-town mayor in America) attended the church annual convention and slept on the floor –not because he could not afford a hotel room- but because literally “bringing himself to the ground level” was a performative act through which he solicited divine favor. The correlation between sleeping on the floor while seeking the face of God is a display of anti-hubris and I have conceptualized such acts as “The Widow Morality.” The Widow Morality is a reformulation of Nietzsche's “master-slave morality” within the rubric of Pentecostal performance and social culture.

The Widow Morality, as I will be noting, is not merely about being humble or modest, it is a staged performance of your humbling conditions or humbled self before God in prayer to get an answer from Him. The modes of manifestation vary but the templates are similar and recognizable. In one of the instances I saw, I was to interview a pastor and I arrived an hour earlier before our appointment. A special victory service for women was ongoing at the time and I was asked to wait outside the church building. I would have gladly joined the service but I was told that I could only do that if I had been participating in a seven-day fasting and prayer that began some days earlier. I was not, and wary of ritual or methodological pollution, I chose to sit

outside and listen to the worship proceedings over the huge loudspeakers blaring songs of worship. I ended up wait for 75 minutes during which I listened to enchanting songs of divine solicitation, some of them bringing up in my mind scholarly intervention on music and its power to produce a transcendental effect on worshippers.<sup>123</sup> One of the songs stuck with me and I went home that day singing it repeatedly, the melody and the lyrics having captured something in me. At that point, I was not even aware how much the song had gotten into me. By evening, the relative I was staying with had had enough and she asked, “But was is it that the world took from you that you are asking God to restore to you?” That was the first time in the evening that I paused to examine the words of the song,

*Gbeto mi fun mi o, Oluwa, gbeto mi fun mi.*

*Omo araye n je mi niya, gbeto mi fun mi.*

*Omo araye n se mi nika, gbeto mi fun mi*

*Omo araye n fejo mi sun, gbeto mi fun.*

*Restore my entitlement, Lord, restore my entitlement*

*The children of this world are making me suffer, restore my entitlement*

*The children of this world are wicked to me, restore my entitlement*

*The children of this world are reporting me (to evil forces), restore my entitlement*

That was the point it occurred to me that my enjoyment of the melody and the mournful aesthetic with which I was expressing it had resulted in my mindless repetition of the lyrics. I did not think to pause and critically examined what exactly I was saying (and how I thought my prayers in the song should be answered) but kept regurgitating a song I simply found catchy. Also, I thought the song and my frequent repetition of the lines were beginning to wind me to a certain mode of self-perception. In the song, I was engaged in a battle with the world. I was appealing to God -my father- to intervene on my behalf because I, the poor victim, was weak, helpless, and vulnerable. I was making the appeal, I noticed, from my humbling and humiliating state. The humility I displayed, was also a self-whittling that enhanced God’s magnificence.

When consistently repeated, it could attenuate any form of hubris that might be rising in me as a human agent. I admit that the songs' melody and the lyrics of abjection and victimization gave me some kind of perverse pleasure. Both Amiri Baraka and Wole Soyinka have spoken of music in ritual context as a vehicle of transition, taking a ritual performer to a state of transcendence.<sup>124</sup> In my case, I imagined music's ability to draw the minds and body together and cause us to transcend immediate realities ultimately breeds a victim mentality in those who sing songs of self-effacement.

In another instance, I listened to the testimony of a couple who said they chose to attend church convention shortly after losing their only child. The convention typically lasted a week and the very first day of the meeting, it rained. As they had no money to get an accommodation in either a hotel or at the hostels around the church area, the couple slept in the open fields of the convention grounds and found themselves at the mercy of the weather. They said they ended up drenched and in that state, they had prayed to God and fervently asked him to look down from heaven; to consider their suffering in his house and in his presence, and give them another child. A year later, they had returned with another child and they were testifying before the entire church saying "all glory be to God." The conflation of bereavement trauma with the humiliation of being too poor became a stage for this couple to launch their appeal to God. They had had a child by their own biological efforts but due to their modes of solicitation, staging their multiple conditions of poverty and bereavement before God, they do not –and cannot- own their own victory of becoming parents once again.

I have found similar strands of thought expressed in various ways and the materials that inform this essay – interviews with people at the Redeemed Church annual convention in 2015 and at their homes; a rhetorical analysis of taped testimonies to me by a church official who had



the task to destroy them allowed me to write down some of the them - all reflect this pattern of self-effacement. There is a self-presentation— either in intercessory prayers or testimonies of victory - as an abject victim of world circumstances who can find -or has found- redemption in the power of God. In the next section, I advance the concept of “The Widow Morality” as a theoretical concept towards analyzing this anti-hubristic behavior. The Widow Morality is a recreation of the Nietzschean concept of the slave-master morality conjoined with a parable from the Bible. The parable, the Widow and the Judge, was one of Jesus’ teachings to his followers. He was showing them the kind behavior that can prompt their receiving answers from God and analysis is a re-reading of the text to not only pry out the dynamics of the God-man relationship in intercessory prayer but also to maintain the theological content of the interaction in a way Nietzsche’s master-slave morality does not capture.

In the sections after, I will focus on church performances by reviewing people’s testimonies, prayer requests, dances, and acts of prayers. Also, I will review two songs from popular culture, *God Win* and *Osinachi*, to demonstrate that the Pentecostal anti-hubris both tracks reflect not only exaggerates anti-hubris but its (unwitting) parodying of self-subordination also subverts the ideal of anti-hubris.<sup>125</sup> These songs are popular and although they did not set out to be church songs, they have become “church songs” because some churches either sing them in their praise and worship services or invite these secular singers to their churches to perform the songs for the congregation.<sup>126</sup> My bringing in popular culture into this analysis of Pentecostal performances is to show how part of the ways the Pentecostal culture expands its territory in Nigeria. By absorbing materials from “the world” that resonates with its religious values and dispensing them back into the public realm, the society gradually becomes “pentecostalized” thus blurring the lines between what is considered sacred or secular.

Anthropologist, Bigit Meyer, describes the Pentecostal infusion of public culture -and public culture's eager re-echo of Pentecostal values- as "pentecostalite." She attributes the exchange to the commercialization and liberalization of the mass media, a factor that has greatly enabled Pentecostalism to grow.<sup>127</sup> Once Pentecostals seized control of the media at the time it was liberalized, they dominated it until their values and ethos became pervasive. I am focusing on the music aspect of Pentecostal/secular culture because as music critic, Arnold Jonathan has pointed out, music is a thread that unites the realms we designate as "secular" and "sacred."<sup>128</sup> Church themselves people are aware of this exchange of values and sometimes people lament, "ijo ti wo inu aye, aye ti wo inu ijo." That is, the world has infiltrated the church and the church is bending its own values to accommodate the world and its sinful nature. While this kind of lamentation understandably demonstrates their desire to maintain the church's purity against increasing deterritorialization and infringement of the secular, the mutual encroachment of -and subsequent smudging of lines that borders - the church and the world- is a historical and cultural inevitability given the proximity of both spheres. The music that is transacted between the church and the society can, however, be used as a barometer to assess the values of both spheres, and how their interactions accelerate or decelerate the moral pulse of either side.

Exploring this circuit of exchange between the "secular" and the "sacred" is vital to understanding how the notion of Godmentality percolates various spheres of the social culture and, also, how its expansion of the repertoire of cultural behavior re-shapes the society's moral universe. When religious culture attunes people to certain values, reshaping the contours of their subjectivity, the popular culture that operates in such a cultural context either responds by absorbing part of the values as well or counters it through blasphemy. (The same can be said of a church culture that operates in a sociological context; it invariably gets influenced by social

culture). Therefore a study of theological behavior has to engage social culture because both co-exist within the same context and people navigate both arenas all the time.<sup>129</sup> According to Katrien Pype, the charisma and zeal that drives the Pentecostal message tend to spill over into the secular and popular culture's promotion of Pentecostal value becomes easier because the church's teachings have already made the market conducive for receptivity of the message.<sup>130</sup> In this case, the interaction of both the church and the society does not only smudge differentiating lines but also invests the body politic with a notion of "God." The re-configuration of the public sphere with Pentecostal values is a political project that is necessary to make the larger society conducive for Pentecostal Christians who dwell in it. This is not to argue that Pentecostal values are solely the ones that pervade the Nigerian habitus, they frequently contest with others that emanate from other religious and secular cultures. Part of my task in this chapter is to inquire how, with the imbuelement of popular values with the Pentecostal ethos, secular music takes on a sacramental quality and further transcribes Pentecostal ethics to secular society.

At this point, I should issue a caveat that what I refer to as "Pentecostal values" or its ethos are not self-generating; their origins cannot be isolated from their wider cultural context they are situated even though Christians tend to point to the Bible as a source of their ritual behavior. Anti-hubris and a self-surrender to the redeeming power of an almighty God are found in attitudes of African traditional religious beliefs, which of course, predates Christianity. I will explain this much later in the chapter but it should be noted that these attitudes found resonance with the Bible during the earliest waves of Christianity movement, evolved with the society, and have presently become a calcified cultural worldview. However, due to the spectacular nature of Pentecostal worship, and the enhancement of its propagation by its creative use of all forms of popular media, Pentecostal values have percolated every aspect of public culture such that the

popular Pentecostal church seems to be their source. Whereas Pentecostalism did not create them, the pervasiveness of Pentecostal practice and the ubiquity of their churches through the cultural landscape helps puts the Pentecostal name on them. In fact, that ability to plant its charismatic banner on existing values and practices is one of the key essences of Pentecostal creativity.

### **The Widow Morality and the Nature of Anti-Hubris**

*Then He (Jesus) spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, saying: "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Vindicate me of my adversary.' And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.'"* Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily"<sup>131</sup>

The above parable, narrated by Jesus Christ, teaches persistence to Christians in their solicitation of divine intervention in their affairs. The story, like all parables, teach a moral lesson - that dogged, unattenuated faith makes us take actions that lead to eventual triumph. Beyond that obvious interpretation is also a typification of power interactions of human beings in their unequal relationship with God, an underlying assignment of roles to weaker human subjects who solicit omnipotent divine power; and a moral instruction that persistently performing that role as a rehearsal of one's act of faith will make prior belief come "true." In a deliberate gesture to theatricality, "role" here suggests that one's place in the cosmological hierarchy is pre-given and knowing that determines the terms of one's interaction with spectral forces. Jesus, as both the son of God and the narrator of the parable, has the extra-diegetic insight to present the reasoning of the godhead to his listeners and thereby encourage them to a strategic art of interaction: to appear before God "wearing" one's denigrating conditions, and keep showing up

to repeatedly solicit his intervention in evacuating those displeasing conditions of existence. The parable gave his listeners a moral script that showed them their roles were pre-given and they would have to *perform* themselves in a certain way for God can answer their prayers. God the divine father, when folded into the narration, was made a foil of the conscienceless judge and the ultimate climax of adjudicatory power.

The moral of this story, therefore, presents an indoctrinating psychology that teaches believers how to work for their benefits within the constriction of strangulating systems. These teachings invariably result in specific understandings of transcendental power interactions and the concomitant effect is a performance of the self in worship rituals. Christians relate to God within a vast field of psychic understanding of cosmological arrangements of power dynamics, prompting the drama of their prayers when worshipping or soliciting God. The story of the widow in the parable – in its letter and its spirit- offers a hermeneutical frame useful for me to analyze the dynamics of Pentecostal worship and prayer.<sup>132</sup> The breakdown of “role” starts with Jesus identifying this pair by their social identity, not as persons or individuals, making them reducible into archetypes. The judge in the parable is a representation of patriarchy and power – cultural, juridical, social, and institutional- and is the very antithesis of the powerless widow whose social and material conditions suggest she is a denuded figure who requires protection from the judge outside what social structures already guarantee. Jesus urges his followers to identify with the widow, a position of weakness, but one who would undoubtedly have resonated with followers whose existential conditions were like that of the widow.

The widow as an archetype is also significant because the patriarchal context that produced the Bible protected widows from gratuitous violence by creating myths about her connection to God. In the Bible, there are at least 75 verses of scriptures about widows, many of

them describing her as a perennial target of God's mercy and a divinely protected subject. Some of these try to "re-dress" her by surrogating the missing link – the man- in her life with God or with her male child who provides her with some form of social covering.<sup>133</sup> The patriarchy that formed the historical traditions that produced the Bible does not consider that a woman exists for herself but in relation to the man who forms a veneer of protection – social, moral, cultural, financial and spiritual- around her person. Widowhood and its consequence of social strangulation transcend Biblical metaphorical abstraction; it is a material reality impact for women diminished by the lack of male presence in their lives. Yoruba Christians, for instance, carry out the "re-dress" of a widow by typically referring to her as "the wife of God/Jesus."

The widowhood imagery is also one that has universal resonance and a Nigerian worshipper can easily relate to her plight because of the similarities between the culture that produced the Bible and societies like Nigeria.<sup>134</sup> Studies from cultures in southern Nigeria have noted that the experience of the death of a female spouse is not as traumatic as that of a male spouse for, when a man dies the first suspect is the wife.<sup>135</sup> Depending on factors such as individual culture, the widow's level of education, her relationship to her in-laws, her social status and level of financial independence, the woman could be subjected to several rituals and oath taking to prove her innocence in her husband's death. Afterward, she will have to go through other rituals; some that are believed will enhance the passage of her husband to the spiritual realm and others to permanently bar his spirit from returning to either haunt her or make sexual demands on her. Such rituals take a mental and financial toll on the women who have no power or social standing to refuse to go through them.<sup>136</sup> In some cultures, the woman is expected to marry her husband's younger brother to retain her within the same family structure. The helplessness of the widow in the parable who had to assail a judge for redress of a wrong

done to her is therefore as much social realism for the listener, as it is an abstract narrative device.

Both the widow and the judge types provide the basis on which I formulated the Pentecostal anti-hubristic character which I called “The Widow Morality.” The widow morality, as I will be showing subsequently, is essentially the performance of one’s enfeebling condition to gain first a spiritual advantage in the unequal God-man dynamic encountered in the spiritual realm during prayer; then, a moral advantage in the cultural context the Pentecostal agent physically dwells. While the concept of “The Widow Morality” is my rethinking of Nietzsche’s master-slave morality, its summary evolved from the works of Georg Hegel, Fredrich Nietzsche, and Franz Fanon whose exploration of the interdependent relationship between two classes of unequal rank and status provides broad frames to critique man in relationship to God. The three theories, fashioned through different historical consciousness (and which makes all three culturally and historically specific), explores relationship of inequality where the strength of the dominant Other is eventually diminished through the unleashing of the energy and force contained in the weaker subject who they variously typified as slave, bondsman, and colonized subject.<sup>137</sup> Hegel’s slave-master dialectic in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* was born from the context of Europe’s feudal history and precipitated Marxist theories and other critical theories that engage the self/other dialectic.<sup>138</sup> Hegel’s master-slave dialectic argues that the contest between the master and the slave peaks with the master’s realization that since his identity revolves around holding the slave, he himself is not free.<sup>139</sup>

Nietzsche’s master-slave morality in *The Genealogy of Morals* and *Beyond Good and Evil* argues the dialectic of master and slave as counter-positions.<sup>140</sup> The master morality is above the herd; elite and exclusive, it is a determiner of values and does not have to care about

what the dominated other thinks. The slave morality, however, is a reaction to the master morality and it inverted “good and bad” to “good and evil.” The slave, witnessing the master’s conquest and triumphalism, rationalized his/her oppression through “*ressentiment*” a form of resolute self-righteousness that erupts in the weak because it is powerless to do anything else. *Ressentiment* rated values such as self-pity, charity, and worldliness above the values of the master morality -a psychological vengeance that over generations became embodied memory.<sup>141</sup> This inversion of aristocratic values was, to Nietzsche, “the act of the most spiritual revenge.” The *ressentiment* of the enslaved was “submerged hatred, the vengefulness of the impotent...” and a performance by people who know “how to keep silent, how not to forget, how to wait, how to be provisionally self-deprecating and humble”<sup>142</sup> Through *ressentiment* weakness finds ennoblement, and a repressed thirst for vengeance is bedecked in virtues of “love, compassion and the thirst for justice.”<sup>143</sup> This, Nietzsche claims, was the beginnings of Christian virtues of self-sacrifice of freedom and pride, and consequent valorization of wretchedness, suffering, deprivation, sickness, and construing them all as piety. The values of nobility and strength which the master had previously espoused (and with which he conquered and build empires) became “evil.” The master morality attributes were brandished as cruelty, lustfulness, greed and godlessness, all of which made the “master” candidates for eternal damnation.<sup>144</sup>

Of the three, Fanon explores the consciousness of the colonized subject and points out that given the context of colonial history, the colonized subject was completely socialized into a worldview that relies on the existence of the dominant Other.<sup>145</sup> The political realism of being a colonized subject tilling the land for the Other was an ever-present reality and for this reason, any self-consciousness the colonized would achieve must revise its internal composition. To address the self-consciousness of the slave, Fanon advocates the purgative power of violence



arguing that in the context of colonialism, the reciprocity of Hegel's master consciousness is inapplicable. He says, "Here (in the Martinique), the master laughs at the consciousness of the slave. What he wants from the slave is not recognition but work."<sup>146</sup> While the three agreed that domination cannot be sustained, and Hegel thinks that the productivity of labor is self-transforming and will eventually lead the slave to overthrow the master, it is Nietzsche and Fanon's types that both explored the seething emotions of hatred and envy in the slave archetype. In my formulation of the Widow Morality, I am looking at not just the emotions of the underclass in relation to the Other but to look at how their humbling conditions breeds anti-hubris and anti-hubris becomes a self-disciplinary technique.

Biblical scholars who have explored the dynamics of the relationship between the widow and the judge in the parable have considered the inequality of their relationship and the triumph of debasement over repressive power. George Murray, for instance, described the imagery of a widow in the parable as one "classed in popular sentiment with the stranger and the fatherless, as emblems of the defenseless and dependent portions of the society" but one who was also gifted with an "invincible" weapon and that is "the power of speech."<sup>147</sup> This weaponization of the self-elaborates an archetypical play of power between the human subject and God (the divine being) before whom prayer is performed and the dynamics embedded in the performance of the rituals of faith. The widow's self-narration in the parable is not merely about the words she uttered but also the performance of her *self* in its humbling conditions. Already, she is a widow and the humility of her condition is presumably obvious; her adjoining words of solicitation of the judge were a reiteration of a story that was prefigured by her material presence. Like the testimony of the local government chairman that opened this chapter, the widow's humbling condition

becomes a performative resource for a negotiation between an all-powerful divine Other and a human agent aware of its own fleshly limitations in superhuman interactions.



*Figure 8 – Prayer and worship demands both physical and spiritual submission*

Herbert Lockyert says the relationship between the widow and the judge is a study in contrast – extreme arrogance vs. extreme impotence, and the eventual triumph of impotence.<sup>148</sup> According to Giorgio Agamben, such deliberate act of self-suppression is the believer's way of performing enfeebleness with the hope of activating God's mighty power and strength.<sup>149</sup> This attitude of weakness that can be made into strength underscores the concept of *the widow morality*: an acknowledgment of one's weakness, the Other's power, and the performative and rhetorical strategies through which the former wrests privileges from the latter. The widow's meeting the judge to seek a favor is premised on the verticality of power, and the acknowledgment of this power differential is evinced by her constant prodding of the judge. Who the adversary is and what the details of her case with the widow are about will remain unknown but we can fill those absences with projections about the social reality of widowhood that robs her of her human dignity. The judge, when he eventually capitulated to her demand, did so not out of moral obligation to her as a victim, or through a sense of social justice but merely to rid himself of her nuisance. What wearied the judge was not just the words but her "continual coming," the constant re-materialization of her presence that had an affective impact on his otherwise emotional imperviousness. The widow-judge relationship is denominated by power (who embodies it and who needs it) and the self-presentation of the weaker party to ignite power to *perform* on their behalf. The Widow Morality is a subjectivity cultivated by an understanding of one's limitation thus prompting self-whittling and self-abasement as means to compel a higher power and oblige him to an intervention.

The widow-judge typology is also equally significant for its gendered dimensions of power and authority. The one with the power to make things happen is a male and the weaker one, the supplicant, is a female who is missing a male figure of authority in her life. As Jesus

intends it, the heteronormative nature of the relationship between the pair construes God as male and the believer -regardless of actual gender- as female. Scholarly debates have critiqued the ways the religion has been feminized partly because more women go to church than men and, also, partly because the inherent emotionalism of religion makes it “naturally” appealing to women.<sup>150</sup> What subsists in the case of the widow and the judge is not mere a transaction of sentiments but a strategic subordination of a female before an all-powerful male. The maleness of God has been a subject of multiple studies in feminism where scholars have argued that the representation of God as the male has legitimated male authority and domination over women thus apotheosizing men.<sup>151</sup>

Howard Eilberg-Schwartz’s study on masculinity and the imaging of God in ancient Judaism argues that while religious imagery of God as a man might have legitimated male authority, it also disrupted the meanings of masculinity. The relation between God and man is depicted in the Bible in sexual and erotic terms thus suggesting a monogamous sexual encounter.<sup>152</sup> The tension between the symbolic representation of God as a male and actual male bodies, Eilberg-Schwartz observed, threw up the crisis of homoeroticism. The ancient Jewish culture tried to repress this instinct by forbidding representation of God in material objects (to avoid the tension of dealing with his penis) and prohibiting a feminization of men in any form. The Israelites imaged themselves as “wives of God” to preserve their heterosexual norms but that also created more tensions with their actual material wives. These multiple tensions, suggests Eilberg-Schwartz, accounts for the misogyny in Bible culture.<sup>153</sup> In the case of the widow and the judge, their relationship had no suggestion of sex or eroticism but it foregrounds the feminization of weakness, solicitation, and helplessness.

Notwithstanding the non-existence of sexual congress in the judge-widow encounter, eroticism exists in the metaphoric sense of male-female encounter that involves one party stimulating the other's ego as means to an end. Audre Lorde's insights on *the erotic* as a source of female power and creativity energy -one unshackled from various social burdens patriarchy imposes on women- is useful for understanding the widow's self-assertion through her continuous materialization before the judge.<sup>154</sup> Feminist theologians, following from Lorde, have sought to uncouple eroticism from primal sex and instead understand its mechanism as a sacred and psychospiritual yearning.<sup>155</sup> The yearning that transcends the physical ultimately becomes a spiritual one, and it plays out in prayer and religious rituals. Achille Mbembe, in his analysis of the divine libido, points out that the religious act, in itself, is an erotic-sexual act. By libido, he meant "the emanation of a bio-psychic energy located primarily in the area of sexuality" and this energy is not always realizable in hedonistic delights but in suffering, pain, and extreme physical degeneration. The sensuality of religious act is to achieve a oneness with God, a mutual possession that sees the destruction of either the self or God as means to achieve this oneness.<sup>156</sup>

The widow in the parable can also be understood to be performing her role by doing things with her words and her body. According to J.L. Austin, when words are uttered in the right context, and by the subject empowered to do so, they are a form of action in themselves.<sup>157</sup> By telling the judge to vindicate her of her adversary, the widow is indeed doing things with both her material presence and her language: enforcing the power dynamics of their social differences, and stroking his ego for her own benefit. In doing so, she was wielding her power of eroticism over him and stimulating him for her purpose. The religiosity of the widow's act lies in the continuous activation of divine libido and according to Mbembe, the divine libido is about power; "the power of fantasm and the fantasm of power" as they make it possible to attain a

certain state of peace and plenitude where they ultimately find salvation.<sup>158</sup> Prayer to God who has a superior authority over one's life in itself, therefore, involves – and I am using the language of sex and sensuality now- a masturbation of divine ego to achieve one's desires.

This stroking of divine ego is exemplified in the way Nigerian Pentecostals use an oral-lyrical approach to reach God along with animated corporeal activities they engage during rituals of prayer. They foreground their requests with effusive praise of God and the extent of His power. Yoruba speaking churches particularly follow this track. They chant his *oriki*/praise name (sometimes by appropriating the language indigenous religions use in praising Deities), describing Him as a fortress, a redoubt, a merciful Lord, and a source of infinite power. *Oriki* is a chant of praise poetry with lyrics that comprises history, appreciation, and praise that are spoken to elicit goodwill from the one to which it is directed.<sup>159</sup> Pentecostal churches use it to praise God expecting similar effect. Like Clifton Clarke says, African Pentecostals' reconceptualization of divine transforming power in such indigenous symbolic language evokes a feeling of security and well-being that speaks to the worshippers at a psychic level but which western symbolism does not provide similar validation.<sup>160</sup> Sometimes they use known passages from *Oriki* that are chanted in praise of actual Yoruba Deities or sometimes they resort to rhetorical flourish such as calling God "the unchangeable changer", "King of Kings" "the Lord of Lords" "higher than the highest" "doctor of doctors" etc. In doing so, they work through the same dynamic of *Oriki* – to exalt the "Other" in registers that signal the inequality of their relationship and subordinates them to his power and authority.

Like I mentioned earlier, a church official allowed me to photograph a pile of prayer requests during the national convention in August 2015. The prayer requests were people's solicitations written on small scraps of paper and dropped in the prayer box during the Friday

vigil at the RCCG August convention. Most of them, written in short and brief sentences that I obtained shows a rhetorical pattern of self-presentation from the point of weakness and stoking divine power to work on their behalf. Their solicitation was captured in language such as *let your healing flow into my life; Lord, restore my glory; look down upon me; heal the pain in my heart; heal me; look upon me with mercy and favor; bring comfort to my heart; remove my hardship; change my story; end my pain; remove my reproach and let people stop mocking me; let my breakthrough come; settle my case permanently; end my affliction; let me share a testimony; let the world rejoice with me; destroy my enemies; heal me of my sickness; direct your power in my direction; bring me joy; let me too have a testimony; give me the fruit of the womb....*

From the scraps of appeal to the divine thrust into the prayer box to the women at the victory service praying/singing that their entitlement be restored by God is the similar pattern of people subordinating themselves before God with the language of solicitation a presentation of their humble and humiliating conditions. Then they request their vindication from those adversarial situations by igniting the divine Other's majesty to get him to act on their behalf.

Mbembe also mentions that the dramatics of the religious act -like the sexual act- involves an unleashing of the motor functions along with the sensuous ones.<sup>161</sup> This release of motor functions features in the kinesthetic display of weakness and humility during acts of prayer. The same night at the RCCG convention where I collected prayer points, I observed three categories of people who surrounded the altar after the service had ended: First, there were those who ran to the altar the very moment the service was announced to have ended to immediately glean the power that must have descended on that ritual space. The very moment the General Overseer, Pastor Enoch Adeboye announced that the service was over, the ushers who had



formed a barrier around the altar space stood down and a horde of people from among the congregation surged towards the altar.



*Figure 9 – Worship at the altar at Redemption camp*

Then suddenly, with fervent alacrity, threw themselves at the altar space, holding on to every bit of material used to aesthetize the place: the endless fairy/Christmas lights twirled around the satin materials used to cover the huge wooden frame on which altar sat. To someone with a background in the Pentecostal church, I understood this as a ritual action based on the Scriptural belief in the power resident in material spaces after it must have been touched by an angel. In the



Bible, the miracle at the pool at Bethsaida occur based on the idea of angelic or spectral contact with certain sites. According to the Bible, the poolside was a place where invalids and the broken of the society assemble, wait for an angel to stir the pool, and whoever got in first was healed of whatever afflicts him/her.<sup>162</sup> This scripture, taught in churches and reflected in testimonies, informs the reverent manner people treat the altar immediately after church service.

To an outsider, they might seem like there were contesting with each other especially as they pushed and shoved but they were actually “tapping” (as they describe it) into the anointing at the altar. People touched the altar with their hands, with photos, with pages of prayer list, their credentials, bottles of water and anointing oil, and other materials that could siphon power from the material substances that have been in contact with God’s power during the service, a constant re-enactment of miracles in the Bible where someone was healed of an affliction by touching Jesus or by touching an object or substance that had become sacralized through ritual contact.<sup>163</sup> There was a man who kept touching the altar and would reach out to use the same hand to touch the child carried on the back of a woman I presumed to be his wife all the while urgently muttering his prayers. The wife could not get close to him because of the throng so he would stretch himself to reach the sleeping child. There was a woman who held on to the fabric and prayed loudly for a husband saying God should take away her reproach and settle her in a “happy home.” There were prayers for jobs, for protection, for children, health, promotion, for deliverance from demonic possession and all round well-being.

All about me, people were charging God, prodding him to display the might of his power on their behalf; to prove that he was God and to show the world that he was for them. There were a number of people jostling for a space around the altar and despite the sense of community such closeness was supposed to produce, the prayer rituals were rather individualistic. I did not

particularly stand out from the crowd neither did anyone pay attention to my presence; they were all deeply absorbed in their prayers. An older couple held hands and prayed for someone I suspected was their son who they mentioned in their prayers lived in Benue state in North Central region of Nigeria. They fervently prayed that “the strange woman living in his house be flushed out by the fire of the Holy Ghost.” Some paces away from the crowd praying at the altar, other people were falling on the ground and rolling their bodies to and fro. Some were praying rather silently, evident only by their moving mouths and their arms being raised to heaven. Some were loud as they rolled on the ground, raising their arms and voices to heaven as they solicited God. One could hear their anguished cries but not the words. The second category of people around the RCCG altar were those who could not get close because of the crowd that surrounded the space but who nevertheless demonstrated the malleability of faith performance by utilizing the consecrated space around the altar. They were some paces away from the altar and I assumed that they carved that ritual space for their own prayers was not because the altar space was crowded, but because they needed to perform that act of rolling on the ground, their naked display of self-surrender to the almighty God who can direct his will in their favor.

From the loud guttural screams that launched a rain of saliva on other closely packed bodies during church services, to the moans and groans that escaped the body in prayer in lieu of words, to the clasped palms raised above the head while praying, to the taps of sweat on the skin; their endurance of the pervasive odor of human waste mixed with the tantalizing smells of foods all through the Redemption campsite that night, they were a display self-whittling humility that does not mind being debased to the point of animality.<sup>164</sup> This willful entanglement with materials that produce abjection are part of ritual performances they undertake to demonstrate the urgency of their adversarial conditions.<sup>165</sup> The conditions in which they stoke the divine

libido might seem humiliating but as Joseph Kupfer points out, humiliation is useful because it *humbles* a person and deflates egocentrism in human agents. While for some, humiliation can result in anger and lack of self-confidence, it could deepen one's humility as well.<sup>166</sup> Besides, Mbembe points out that the "transfigurations of pain, suffering, and unhappiness...freeing the subject from various kinds of inhibition, allow him or her to achieve a capacity for ecstasy unachievable under ordinary conditions."<sup>167</sup> No matter how much of corporeal exertion these rituals might seem to a non-participant, it is still prayer in performance. The kinesthetic display, combined with the passion with which they offered to demonstrate their prayers of felt needs to God, and the humility with which they presented themselves as they played those roles are an important part of the ritual performances. Those anti-hubristic performances open the portal to the spiritual realm where their prayers are eventually answered. According to the theologian, Nimi Wariboko, prayer is "oral theology, biblical texts, ritual practices, and spontaneous and heady spirituality carried by and articulated through the body. Prayer—the embodiment, display, and articulation of ideas, hopes, fears, habits, and tradition— is a veritable portal to enter into an understanding of African Pentecostalism."<sup>168</sup>

Further behind those rolling on the ground were dancers who were gyrating to the music still coming from the choir whose faces now dominate the projection screens. This third category of worshippers comprised of youths primarily, young men who had formed dancing groups and improvised matching dance steps. The music was coming from the choir ensemble from the altar and its deep percussive beats pulsated throughout the auditorium and echoed in the hundreds of speakers that littered the Redemption Camp at every corner. They were dancing but no act in this space is construed as mere physical exertion or for sheer pleasure; dancing in church is the prayer of worship and solicitation performed as a dance. In various songs and sermons,

Pentecostals are urged to “dance like (king) David (in the Bible) danced.” That is, to let go of any social inhibitions or consciousness and present themselves as happy subjects of God so as to move him to act on their behalf.<sup>169</sup> The music went on for more than an hour after the service had ended and this group went on, dancing and singing, carefully sidestepping those who were on the ground, rolling and praying.

The widow morality, as essentially the performance of one’s enfeebling condition through a self-presentation of the self as victims of a meaningless world order (and therefore ripe candidates for divine intervention), has an implicit caveat that sustains the power dynamic between God and man: it forbids the attribution of success to one’s human ability. The failure to observe this constraint can result in the undesirable consequence of the shifting of the transactional terms of the Judge-Widow hierarchy. When the prayers people solicit on these grounds are finally granted, these worshippers are careful to “return all the glory to God.” They insist that no matter how they prayed, and much passion they invest in their rituals of divine solicitation, the answer still did not come by power or by might –or one’s savviness. Testimonies after testimonies of answered prayers testified to this unwillingness of the worshipper to own their victories or to attribute it to their efforts. The humility which they practice in prayers whether in their private spaces or around the altar are carried forward to their public attitude and conduct: *this is not me, this is all God*. The Pentecostal anti-hubris character cannot or does not take pride in its own achievements because to do so would be to displace the terms of the Judge-Widow relationship.

For the rest of the parable about the judge and the widow and what could have happened afterward, I imagine the judge granting the widow’s request not only for him to have peace but to also enlist her solidarity. Her victory over her adversary will necessarily be accompanied with

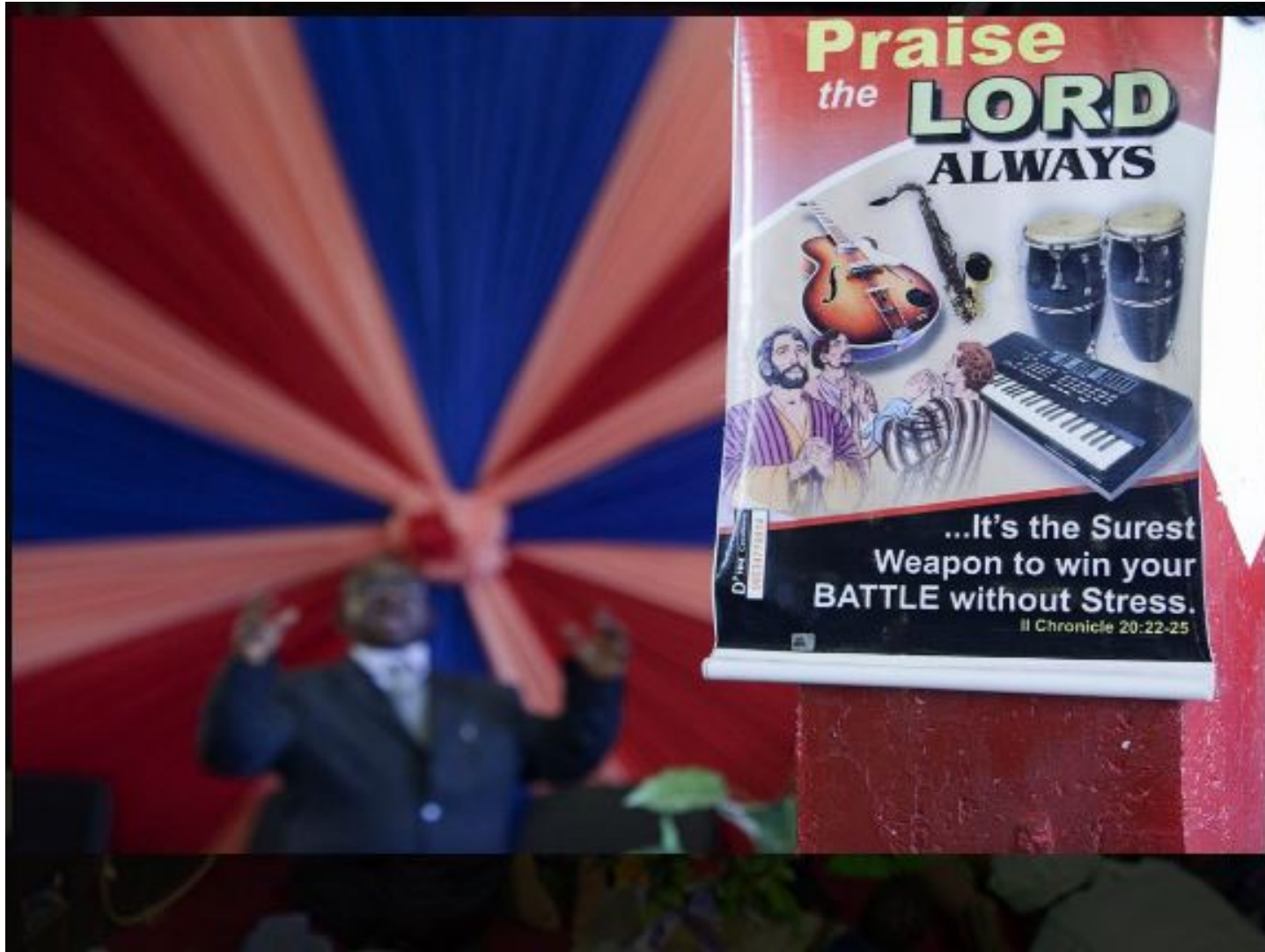
gratitude and put him in her debt. Her story cannot be narrated without a telling of how his intervention saved her at some point. To the primary audience of Jesus who listened to the story, they would have learned that there is power in helplessness; that if one can play one's part with the necessary humility, weakness can compel supernatural power in one's favor. One thus becomes a willing subject, since one owes his/her redemption to a higher power that should be continually befriended to guarantee effectivity of power in one's favor. This notion of "radical dependence" on God orients one towards continually seeking a continued relationship with him since regular channels of adjudication leave behind the poor, the helpless, and the wretched of the earth. The attitude of humility is, however, not constituted solely by these private ritual acts at altars where they solicit God. Instead, the prayer altar is a rehearsal space where performing one's anti-hubris is also the place where they learn to embody it. This learned behavior manifests in material appearances of their eventual victories and when they stage them for the public, they have to append the name of God to it. Because, like the Widow, they have to constantly remind themselves of the scary prospect of provoking the Judge if they brag on their own strength.

In my interactions with these worshippers, I was struck by the extent to which they attributed every happenstance, every fortune or every bit of good luck –however mundane- to God. Pentecostalism makes this "return" and the offering of praise to the God who did "it" mandatory regardless of other means human intervention in their case because to do otherwise would be a sin. On the surface this is humility but beyond that, to claim the glory for any deed would be hubris which, in Greek drama, positioned man against the gods. Hubris signaled man's self-sufficiency, independence of the God, and such pride and exhibitionism of self-satisfaction eventually led to the hero's ruin.<sup>170</sup> A Pentecostal who tries to "share God's glory" would be inviting tragedy because it would mean losing the protection the Widow Morality affords.

Therefore, to retain this position where one can be a receptor of blessings, they are not supposed to belittle or downplay God's role through rhetoric that can displace this precarious balance of power. In the next sections, I will be further examining the dynamics of Widow Morality by exploring why worship compels keen kinesthetic display and effusive corporeal performances in public-private prayer but seeks self-erasure in public victory and answered prayers. These attitudes, I will be showing, are appropriated by non-Christian performers and recycled back into Pentecostal culture for validation of anti-hubris.

### **Na God Win and Osinachi: The Anti-Hubris of Performing Prosperity**

In this section, I will review two popular Nigerian songs that embody the anti-hubristic character: one is *Na God Win* and the other is *Osinachi* (see appendix A for lyrics). The songs contain elements that capture the anti-hubris of Christianity and their lyrical allusion to God demonstrate that they are caught up in the value that Pentecostalism espouses due to the flux between Pentecostal culture and the social context in which it dwells. The music of any culture can serve as a measuring device of its values and its obsessions, and can also link the power center of a culture to its subjects.<sup>171</sup> Music is also vital because it can connect to and alter one's inner consciousness, gives a voice to prayer, creates communities, enhance memory, expand the repertoire of gestures and actions, and ultimately unite one's self to a divine being.<sup>172</sup>



*Figure 10 – Nigerian Pentecostal churches are invested in music as both an act of worship and as prayer*

When music is coupled with dance, especially celebratory dances with appealing choreographed dance steps, they gain a primal quality that creates a hedonistic effect that inflects the music's message. Music, historically, has been used to train people to succumb to their own exploitation and have also been used by exploited people to express their humanity and fashion new steps to freedom.<sup>173</sup> I found out after I started singing along with the women I encountered at the church, music and its abilities to transcend immediate realities can revise our subjectivity – influencing

us, implanting ideas in us, configuring our personality, and persuading us towards an ideological stance.<sup>174</sup>

Both song tracks I will be reviewing have danceable tunes and the vigorous and intense kinetic dances they prompt mean they institute a mode of thinking within the Pentecostals that use them alongside other songs of worship. *Na God Win* is a track by Korede Bello, a performer known primarily for singing secular songs, some of them containing Hip Hop culture's characteristic visual and aural sexual innuendos. *Na God Win* was released on the label of Mavin Records, also primarily known for their repertoire of secular songs. The song got a number of positive reviews from critics who praised not just the melody but also the "message" of the song that they said had a positive and hopeful outlook on life. *Na God Win* became hugely popular in Nigeria, becoming an anthem at celebrations where people wanted to attribute their successes to God.<sup>175</sup> At some point, there was a controversy about the track when Bello was invited to a Pentecostal church to perform during an Easter Concert service. Different factions of Christian on the internet were divided initially on whether the song, not originally intended for the church, was meant to be played during church service. Bello himself silenced his critics by asking, "Am I not allowed to give (share) my testimony again?"<sup>176</sup> By referring to his song and his performance in the church as "testimony" he evokes Pentecostal culture to bequeath *Na God Win* with a religious character.

In an interview Bello granted to *The Nation*, he said his greatest achievement was that he made a popular song that glorifies God; one to which people could dance to "but *still be able* to glorify God goes a long way."<sup>177</sup> Like Bello, the *Osinachi* singer, Humble Smith (real name: Ekene Ijemba) also tries to domicile his song in the church. The song's title, *Osinachi*, in Igbo language means "it is from God." In an interview he granted *The Sun*, Humble Smith also



claimed to have received inspiration from God while he was in church. He said he had gone to church to pray for divine intervention because his previous attempts at breaking into the entertainment industry had repeatedly failed. What emerged instead from his private meditations in church was the song. He confessed that the way it exploded in public imagination was far much more than what he envisaged proving to him that indeed, the song was divinely inspired.<sup>178</sup> Both *Na God Win* and *Osinachi* were released the same year although the *Osinachi* video was later remixed. The remix featured another artist, Davido, whose lyrics featured a mischievous insertion of his ongoing “baby mama drama” issues.

### ***Na God Win***

The song starts with a preface by a popular comedian, Bovi, whose lines mimic the mannerism of pastors, particularly the Pentecostal ones. He tries to “preach” with a serious face but at the same time, the viewer cannot miss the laugh in his face and the attempts to amuse by staring straight at the viewer with wide open eyes. On the screen to the viewer’s right-hand corner is a text written, “Hour of Victory,” a label borrowed from broadcast series of daytime sermons on some TV channels. Bovi begins:

Life, is not by your power! Armed robbers were robbing but you managed to escape, you think that is your victory? You kneel down on one knee, buy flower and propose, and she said that she will marry you, you think that is your victory? You cannot get belle (pregnant) but finally you get belle (pregnant) and you are celebrating and spreading and spraying, you think it is your victory? You know where that glory ought to go? You think if it was easy, meat will not be floating? You will not need to dig deep when you take Eba and put inside soup. You will not need to go under before you get meat. We will take a musical break and the title of this song is “God Win.” Because everything you have been through, na God Win. I will be back!

After he says, “I will be back,” the song cuts to two dancers, the lead singer Bello and his

producer, Don Jazzy.

The song, by starting with a comedic performance that borrows the title of a broadcast series on television that features Pentecostal pastors kicks off lightheartedly but at the same time invests itself with mock seriousness by using religious symbols. It should be noted that jokes about Pentecostal pastors and their “exaggerated preaching” are staples in standup comedy in Nigeria.<sup>179</sup> Bovi himself is a popular comedian but one who has performed in a number of churches and in fact once complained about social media that pastors expect him to perform free during their church services.<sup>180</sup> Making him preface the song was a deliberate choice that tries to exploit his association with the church but at the same time uses him as a court jester so his jocosity does not rub anyone the wrong way. His simultaneous seriousness and buffoonery enables him to role play what the society considers sacred while at the same time distance himself from the implications of jesting with the things of God. His role as a clown is significant: Lauren Mintz suggests that clowns were originally folks who have a physical and social defect that put them marginally below the audience. This social position on the margins licenses them to joke about what the society considers sacred and they can be forgiven. Thus, “in his role as a *negative exemplar*, we laugh *at* him.”<sup>181</sup> Bovi the comedian thus finds safety in buffoonery because role playing pastors as jest could be repelling if the joke turns out to be inappropriate or falls short. The success of his act relies on his ability to pull it off and make the audience laugh without offending their religious sensibilities. While the comic role he plays as a “fake” pastor could bastardize the spiritual significance of the Pentecostal pastor’s performance –believed to be delivered under the anointing of the Holy Spirit- fakery is also the margin that enhances the moral center of pastor power and authority.<sup>182</sup>

Though his comic role requires a subjective understand the Nigerian context, or what Mary Douglas describes as “the total social situation” his words nevertheless contain enough serious moments to cause people to understand its political undertones.<sup>183</sup> Flavoring a message typically preached in churches with humor takes away any feeling of edginess yet pushes out a message that tries to suppress any attempt at self-pride in personal achievement: *you think that is your victory?* After listing a number of instances of positive events that have taken place in people’s lives – escaping armed robbery, being engaged to be married, and getting pregnant- he shifts into “the fool mode” and resorts to certain corny jokes about how these achievements are not easy to come by for everyone. If the achievements he listed were cheap, he suggests, even meat pieces would float in the soup bowl; the person who would consume the meal would not have needed to use the morsel of food to probe deep into the bowl to reach the meat at the bottom of the bowl. From a moment of seriousness that purports to invoke introspection from the beneficiary of divine grace, he reverts to a playfulness that he accentuates by contorting his face and mimicking the familiar mannerisms of Pentecostal. Bovi’s parody is a performance of a stylized and identifiable faith performances that passes across a serious message of anti-hubris.

The lyrics of the song itself play to eight scenarios of God’s triumph in people’s lives, and each of the episodes illustrates the different scenarios. The series of narration starts with a man sitting outside a house, surrounding by his property, and looking forlorn. Apparently, he is being ejected and would soon be homeless. He suddenly gets a bank alert SMS of N6.5m (roughly \$20,000) which he shows to his landlord and then he begins to dance. The landlord motions to him to move his things back to the house as he continues dancing. The second episode shows a man who has just bought a car that was only partially shown to the viewer but looks like a luxury car. We see the keys being handed over to him. The third is an illustration of

a successful album launch and the fourth is that of an actor, identifiable as AY the Comedian, who is playing a rich man who has just purchased a housing estate in Lekki Gardens, a well-known prime property in Lagos, Nigeria that is coveted for its location. We see AY collect the ownership documents and he lifts his hands to the heavens in gratitude. In the fifth episode, a group of four students on their graduation day are beaming with pleasure as they throw their caps in the air. Then there is a couple on their wedding day with an excited bride jumping on her husband. A politician dressed in traditional Igbo garb celebrates an election victory with confetti falling around him. In the final episode, two women are conferring on design plans at a building site. One looks at the camera and smiles. The lyrics of the song suggests they have won a contract.

In the final scene, Korede Bello himself, whose dance scenes has interspersed the various episodes that illustrated the visuals of the song points, directs the eye of the viewer towards the heaven, and says, “God wins!” The eye of the camera, viewing him from a lower angle, gradually ascends, follows his fingers, and rests on the image of moving clouds. Throughout the song the viewer was treated to a number of scenes of clouds – sometimes we are shown moving clouds; sometimes it is cloud smokes enveloping Korede Bello while he dances. In such scenes, the camera is on the ground level so we get to look at him against a bright and blue sky. His viewing angle is godlike because he looks down at the viewer. There are times when the same camera angle does not have the simulate clouds effect so we get to see Korede against the backdrop of bright and blue heavens. The song ends on that note and Bovi the comedian returns and says, smiling, “Welcome back.” Meanwhile, using Bovi the comedian as epilogue is to remind the viewer that this is all a play, done as lighthearted performance even if the message has a serious import.

Part of the appeal of the song and the visual images is the celebratory nature of all it displays: weddings, electoral victory, graduation, financial success, and even victories that are as mundane as getting a bank alert (a form of modern electronic banking that is familiar in the Nigerian social context due to the ubiquity of the mobile phone) or simply making it through to another day. *Na God Win* takes familiar Nigerian anxieties and processes them into a packaged narrative of triumph attributable to God using a danceable music, performed by a young and fresh-faced artist who wears a convivial smile on his face throughout. The song campaigns for anti-hubris attitude in people's interaction with the divine. If things work out for them as they desire, it is God that has triumphed and it is neither by their power nor their might. If things have not worked out for them, they should at least be grateful they made it through another day. Like the widow who is still soliciting the judge for a redress, they only needed to keep reiterating their desires to him and eventually, he would have to respond. As Bovi "jokingly" reminds the audience- when God eventually does it, it is not theirs but *His* victory. The register of "victory" suggests to the listener that there has been war, battle, opposition, weaponry and consequent triumph. The song alludes to these abstract ideas throughout by using "they." This "they" is an imaginary oppositional figure that was created to give the listener a sense that what s/he has achieved came by after an agonistic contest with forces that would rather not let him/her have it. Indeed, the victory would not be sweet without having fought someone or some unseen or imaginary forces for it; and the celebration would not be meaningful if there was not some "they" before whom to flaunt it. They have been vindicated of this adversary just like the widow and they have to celebrate.

## *Osinachi*

The original version of the video was quite simple: it was shot in a church and featured the artist himself, Humble Smith either dancing or sitting and singing between two columns of wooden pews. The only scene outside the church was a shot of him in a commercial bus where he had a dejected look on his face but otherwise, the entire visual was he in a church with six other dancers who were costumed in choir robes. According to Humble Smith himself, he had no money to make an elaborate video as typical of Nigerian songs that are woven around themes of prosperity and power. It was when the song captured public imagination that Davido, a much more successful artist, asked him to collaborate on a remix project. The remix was staged in a rural/village setting where there were traditional performers in the public square blowing flutes, beating drums and dancing. A comedian holding a microphone with an insignia showing HopTV announces that “two sons” of the kingdom were coming and they would be taken to the palace.

The next scene featured luxury Mercedes and Range Rover cars pulling up into view and both Davido and Humble Smith emerging from the cars. While the video put much of indigenous Igbo culture on display with its feature of dancers, masquerade shows, architecture, royalty, and costumes, the glamor of wealth and excess of it was evident throughout. Much like *Na God Win*, *Osinachi* too attributes all its success to God. The song says people who are amazed at his success keep asking him the source of his success and he attributes it all to God. He reiterates that his success did not come because he fasted, prayed, or because his sufferings were worse than anyone else’s but simply because God chose him. In his current state, he points out, he has bidden poverty goodbye and he goes to Dubai (a favorite tourist destination for Nigerians) to splurge and he has taken over Malaysia (another favorite destination for Nigerian business class). Throughout the song, he reiterates that everything he has, and all the success that come to him,

all came from God. He himself has nothing to do with his success and even though people want to attribute it to occultic transactions, he insists that it came from God and only from him. Unlike *Na God Win*, the idea of antagonistic forces he creates is not a human self/other dialectic. Instead, it is God/jazz (or Baba) which in Nigerian parlance means power obtained through “black magic” or occult power. Considering that the video takes place in a village, and some of the ritual practices features could easily be put off to a (Christian) religious audience, Humble Smith’s insistence on “God” is also a disengagement of his success from occult power.

There are some noteworthy elements in both videos that enhanced their appeal across ethnicity, ages, social classes, and in fact, religion and made them a universal celebration anthem that is played at occasions where people celebrate one thing or the other. One, the song makes use of Nigerian pidgin English which is an indigenized variant of British language and which can be considered Nigeria’s unofficial lingua franca. The song has transcended social class and is currently spoken by both the educated and uneducated class.<sup>184</sup> Both songs, by employing pidgin English, thus strive for the widest audiences possible. Two, the songs mention God but do not particularize him to any religion and that has been a factor that has helped the song appeal to non-Christians as well. Three, the themes of the songs resonated with the “health and wealth” message of the Pentecostal prosperity gospel which promises believers material and social success if they believed in God and followed certain Biblical principles.<sup>185</sup> From academic success to personal success to immense financial wealth; from passing exams to getting married; from getting a job to raising a family, the songs celebrate rites of passage and a wide variety of achievements with melodic music and spectacular display of wealth such that it allows people who have attained those life goals can consecrate them to God as a sign of their humble surrender to his sovereignty.

Both *Osinachi* and *Na God Win* present idealistic representations of basic class achievements as extraordinary and by putting them in song format, they take on an emotional appeal. The songs, however, catch on with Christians because they appropriate the Pentecostal culture of “testimony” where Christians perform their gratitude to God for their victories. During “testimony time” in church, people do exhibit their successes, material and otherwise, publicly to testify to God’s goodness. Both songs mimic this attitude with the exhibitionism of material goods but avoids the sin of hubris (and the charge of vaingloriousness) by giving all the glory of its acquisition to God. John Jones, speaking of hubris in ancient Greece said that attaining an eminent status produced a certain vulnerability in the Greeks such that pointing out the difficulty of being prominent and at the same time avoiding hubris was a cultural fixation.<sup>186</sup> The songs thus express Pentecostal theology’s predisposition to exhibitionism of success during the ritual of sharing one’s testimony publicly finds means of moralizing wealth by attributing it to God.<sup>187</sup> Within churches, people tell their stories of victory during “testimony time” and occasionally, some gets on the ground on the altar and rolls to and fro to show their gratitude to God and that they remain his humble subjects even in their conquests. The two songs encapsulate their gratitude and the anti-hubris of “returning all the glory to God.” By praising God publicly, they securely locking those achievements because it means God is compelled to preserve it on their behalf.

Churches and Christians could virtually relate to the song and treat them like an anthem of testimony because both songs are a repository of their church values they preach and making them into enjoyable music means it deepens the embodiment of the message – this is not your victory, this is God’s. Because music gets us to react, transporting us through time and space by captivating and thrilling us, they produce a religious sensation whether they are religious or not.



The *jouissance* of the experience of worship – music’s transcendence and the kinetics of dancing makes people exercise their bodies literally along with their minds during worship and the anti-hubris becomes more amenable. Here lie the effect of both songs: is anti-hubris, when represented in dramatic episodes of brag and exhibitionism, still anti-hubris or a parody of it? Did not *Na God Win* and *Osinachi*, by displaying a restraint of the human tendency to take a prideful sense of its achievement, in fact, materialize self-aggrandizement? Scholars have examined the tension between humility and knowledge, asking if humility borne out of self-awareness can be treated as humility.<sup>188</sup> The anti-hubris embedded in both *Na God Win* and *Osinachi*, both pushing all the successes and glory of their victories to God, reflects a cultural disposition of gratitude but also subverts it through the self-celebration it tries to hide. In trying not to personally own their success but consecrate it to God, the impossibility of the purported self-effacement in such grandiose exhibition of achievements and performing of gratitude becomes stark. Through its visual representations of exaggerated and idealistic images of success, anti-hubris becomes a performance of self-aggrandizement. Like Narcissus, they gaze at their own outsized reflection in the river but they are back from falling in because they maintain the required dose of anti-hubris.

### **Anti-Hubris and the Widow Morality**

However, what is it about the Widow Morality that it compels a self-materialization in abjection, a self-erasure in victory, and construes both as anti-hubris? How and why do people go from the prayer room where they throw themselves on the floor and sing songs of sorrow to the church altar where they triumphantly share their testimonies and seal it with “This was just God, not me”? Why do they appropriate popular songs like *Na God Win* and *Osinachi* that

promotes self-effacement –it was just God, not me– in their testimonies and praise/worship sessions? When people flaunt their blessings while declaring “it was all God” are they truly displaying anti-hubris or in fact defying it through exhibitionism? And can such an act of defiance be classified as a display of agency and subjectivity? There are a number of historical and cultural factors that accounts for anti-hubris in Pentecostal culture. One is the belief that pride is a sin and will ultimately lead to downfall and destruction. In western classical tragedies, hubris leads to the downfall of the character because such self-elevation is the human agent’s way of pitching itself against the Gods. As John Jones put it, hubris is not mere “impiety” but it encapsulates an attitude of “doing deeds and thinking thoughts *greater* than those which a human being ought to do and think.”<sup>189</sup> The lesson of King Nebuchadnezzar’s story as one mode of regulating religious conduct and restraining the sin comes to mind here. In the Bible, King Nebuchadnezzar was a great king who lost his kingdom when at the peak of his kingship when at some point, he looked out, saw the glory of the great city of Babylon and said, "Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?" The Bible records that a voice spoke from heaven and said that the king would be driven from human dwellings, be animalized for seven years until he acknowledges God as the ultimate ruler. After he had passed through this humbling and humiliating phase, his kingdom and power were eventually restored.<sup>190</sup>

There is also a cultural factor involved in maintaining an anti-hubristic attitude and “culture” in a contemporary context in Africa contains strands of indigenous values and their evolutions as influenced by postcolonial (religious) values. African indigenous religious might not have as many followers as Christianity and Islam but the former still forms the basis of their worldview and this is evident in their performance of their rituals of their faith. As Ogbu Kalu

has argued, a historiography of African church should not start with missiological narratives but should be anchored on her primal religion and culture “because both the church and her enemies, namely, the politicians and other religious forms derive their character and source their idioms from the interior of African worldview...we should explore how African Christianity is essentially rooted in primal religion....”<sup>191</sup> At the same time, these beliefs are “Christian” because they are found in the Bible as examples of the values people are expected to adhere to or live by. In my interviews with church members, people alluded more to the Bible in explanation of their anti-hubris than refer to any source of indigenous consciousness as responsible for their beliefs. They generally pointed out that if you believe in God and your identity derives from him, then everything you do has to be “Na God Win.” A congregation member in Ibadan said to me that “God Win” is both a performance piety for Christians and an acknowledgment of their human limitations. They do not merely consider God causal factor or an appendage to the constitution of their outlook, they take him as the very source of their being. Therefore, no victory or success can be evaluated outside this paradigm of belief. In another interaction with an interviewee, Brother D,

I am a Christian and I obey the Bible. The Bible says, whether therefore you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. So if you are a Christian, everything you do and do successfully can only be God. Anyone who does otherwise is disobeying the Bible. The Bible says in Isaiah 42:8, "I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not yield my glory to another or my praise to idols." When you yield God's glory to yourself or something else, you are toying with idolatry. In the New Testament, Paul said, "But God's grace has made me what I am, and his grace to me was not wasted. I worked harder than all the other apostles. (But it was not I really; it was God's grace that was with me)." Tell me, what can you do by yourself as a human being? It's God to whom we owe everything.<sup>192</sup>

The notion of “time and chance” implied luck in one’s affairs but none of the respondents were willing to characterize it that way. They thought luck was “worldly” and being “blessed” is more

Christianly in attribution. Two of the respondents narrated stories to me of how they had, at some point in their lives, had been “blessed” to have been in the right place at the right time and they considered that it was God that ordered their footsteps. If God did not have everything to do with it, they would have been elsewhere at the time and so yes, it is all God and they can only give all the glory to him. They would retain none of it for themselves. One point that was reiterated by my interviewees was the fact that because they know God will triumph ultimately does not mean they would be lazy or that their own human agency would be totally eroded in the scheme of things. In fact, when they are working with God, they want to put in their best because they know he will not reward shoddiness. The Bible says a man will reap whatever he sows because God cannot be mocked. Yet, for all their hard work, there is the ever-present fear of unseen and malignant supernatural force that will imperil their efforts and that is why God is very important. The thought that it all begins and ends with God, therefore, stems their hubris, that sense of pride that pushes heroes in western traditions to test the limit of their human capabilities could result.<sup>193</sup> I have synchronized the seven different responses into three composite ones and the direct quotations are stated below:

I recognize that I have my own roles to play in making right choices but don't forget the Bible says unless the Lord builds a house, the laborer labors in vain. The same Bible also said the race is not to the swift, the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favor to the learned; but time and chance happens to them all. God is the one that controls time and chance and if it works for you, you had better say “Na God” as an expression of humility and an acknowledgment of the role divine providence played in shaping our lives. Sometimes you may do everything the right way and providence says no, and that means no positive results. Besides, it is not really cool for one to talk about oneself and how one worked one's way to success. Talking about oneself and achievement without putting "na God" may sound arrogant and you don't want to be seen as pompous and self-glorifying.

Of course, if you believe in God and in his power, it is just normal to ascribe every achievement to His grace and favor, considering that we pass over

everything. However, it is common knowledge, even among believers of all faiths, that if you don't do your part, you may wait forever -- which already leaves room for the 'I' word that many consider boastful. I believe, though, that it doesn't deduct from anyone's integrity if you give the a-b-c of what you did to get what you have: enduring marriage, wealth, avoiding death by accident, business/academic success, good health, longevity.

Like many Nigerians, I believe very much in God but I also believe in being practical about things. For instance, I trust God for my security but I have a gun. Both works for me because if I say, "it is all about me" and I incur the wrath of God, what do I do? I have heard testimonies of people who did not give glory to God after they sought his face for help and they lost their miracles. That will not be our portion in Jesus name and that is why one has to hang the whole of oneself on God. There are simply too many variables in this world for you to think you are self-sufficient. There are people that are better than you are but who do not have what you have, why do you think it is by your power or might? In the jungle we currently inhabit (Nigeria), it is honest to downplay our skills and character in any achievement we have.<sup>194</sup>

### **Summary**

The Widow Morality, as a self-regulatory conduct of Pentecostal agents play out through the orienting attitude of humility, or anti-hubris. In the Human-God relationship dynamic, the power that can perform on the behalf of the human agent (the "Widow" type) is preponderantly on God's side. To compel Him to move in their favor, they have to perform prayer rituals which entail a wallowing in the humiliations of their humbling conditions. This attitude, practiced over time, becomes anti-hubris which keeps the believer in check and suppresses the tendency to begin to consider themselves as self-sufficient and thereby sin against God. Their songs and ritual practices, especially when it entails soliciting divine favor or intervention, reflects this self-whittling which ultimately enhances God and the glory of his majesty. The Widow Morality has its ideological underpinnings in both the Bible and in traditional religious beliefs but its values have been enhanced by the Pentecostal movement due to its evangelizing attributes that spread

its cultural strains everywhere and place it occupies. Popular culture, catching this strain of anti-hubris produces music that reflects this value and in the process, subtly ties the song to church and religion. The church picks on it by co-opting the song and/or the artist into their worship and invests the song with a Pentecostal hue. Such exchange of culture between the church and the secular blurs the dividing line between the two spheres.

For the church, it helps to make the social culture more amenable to their ethos and widens their sphere of authority. For the social culture, imbibing religious values helps to place a moral stamp on their activities. One thing that is particularly noteworthy is the dissenting agency of the believer who subscribes to these popular songs. While the songs, on the surface, reflect the Widow Morality, the representation of anti-hubris is subverted in the crass exhibitionism of material items which the singers brandish as their “testimony.” In trying to deflect attention and pointing us solely towards God whose presence is immaterial, they in fact point back at themselves and reflect their anti-hubris as a staged moral virtue rather than an innate goodness.

### Chapter 3:

#### The Word of God and the Performance of Immanence

*For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ - The Bible<sup>1</sup>*

*All things you will ever need in your life, they are wrapped up in the Word. Go for the Word! ....You need to understand this thing (the Word of God)...And when you get hold of it, keep saying it! Don't stop talking it! Keep saying it! Keep saying it! ... The Bible says in the city of Ephesus, so mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed! Can you shout Amen?! ...And it sets the course I must follow! In the name of Jesus! Prosperity is mine! In the name of Jesus! The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want! He makes me lie down! In green pastures! He leads me! Besides the still waters! Yaaaay! Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death! I fear no evil! – Pastor Chris Oyakhilome.<sup>2</sup>*

This chapter's dissection of Godmentality is an analysis of the Word of God in its spoken and performative forms as a disciplinary technique of Pentecostal faith. Godmentality, the political project by which Pentecostals beat the ethos of the social culture into a shape that is conducive for the expressions of their faith, works because Pentecostals condition themselves using the Word of God. Their self-conditioning shapes their moral subjectivity and in performing who they have become, impose their subjective transformation on the society. The Word of God is the inspiration for Pentecostal behavior and the constant enactment of these performances functions as “vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory and a sense of identity through reiterated, or what Richard Schechner called “twice-behaved behavior.”<sup>3</sup> Since the character of places are established by convention and “they inform the lived modes of embodiment we acquire over time,”<sup>4</sup> Pentecostal performances ultimately transfers embodied knowledge that revises social norms and immures bodies into subjective modes of being. The Word of God, as I use it in this chapter, is primarily the Bible although I extend the notion to all the cultural production sourced from the Bible. Such biblical derivatives include prophetic utterances, church publications, naming at natural birth and self-renaming at the new birth (or the

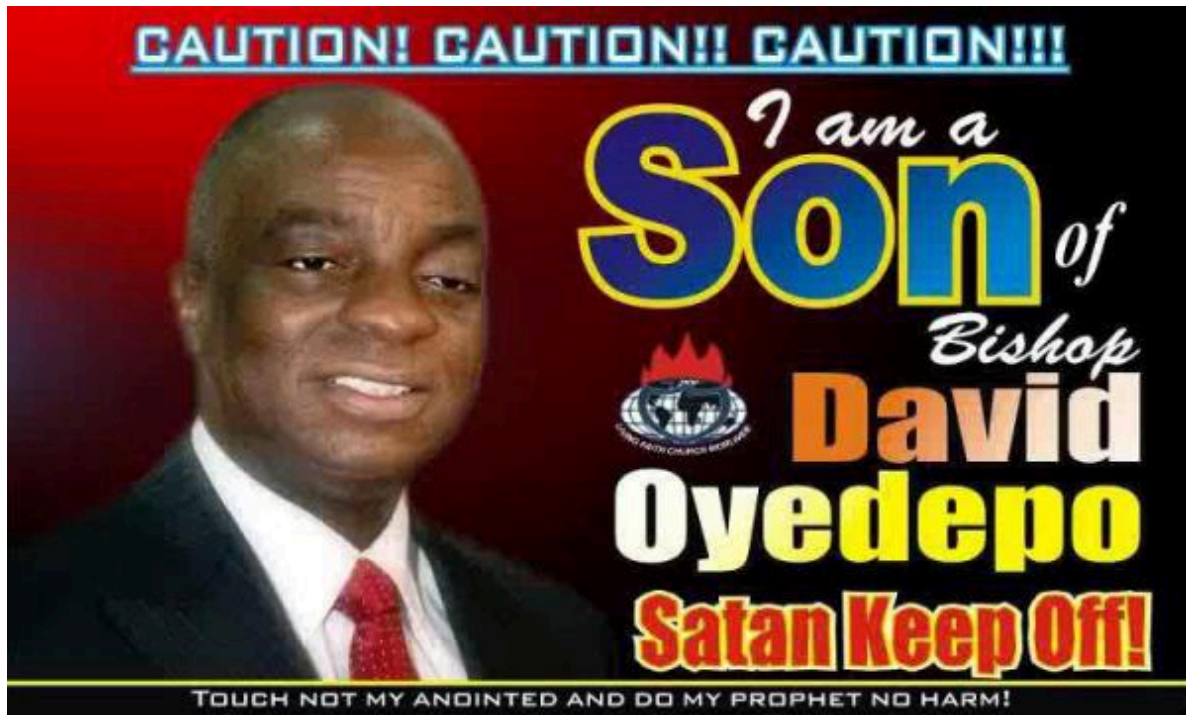
“born again” experience), prayers, spoken words of command, confessional statements, testimony, artistic expressions, prophetic declarations, public preaching, multiple written and oral texts, and other forms of inspiration that emanate from the tongue. Although sermons are artistic expressions of pastors delivered with oral narration skills like village storytellers,<sup>5</sup> they are also included in this category largely because they are scripturally inspired.

The use of the Bible in Pentecostal rituals, as I shall be demonstrating, are citational (taking the format of courtroom pleas), oral, evocative, performative, and mostly individualistic. While they are expressed in authoritative and verdictive stances, they also function as means of creative inscriptions for believers. When believers continuously imbibe the Word of God it results in a congruence between their body and the text – the text grants them the authority to make things happen in the world and makes certain demands that police and regulate their conducts in this world. Throughout this chapter, I will be looking at one, Pentecostal use of the Bible by studying how a continuous absorption of the word integrates into believers’ social and psychological schema such that it forms the basis of their moral universe; two, notions of performative utterances as a performance of immanent power by individual believers; and three, the Word as a meta-script that inspires believers’ performance of their own existence or as perlocutionary (that is, sets in motion a series of events that are consequence of the utterances). The Word of God is a means of contestation between the natural and the supernatural worlds, and the continuous performance of ritualized words eventually shapes the subjectivity of the believer and the performance of this subjectivity affects cultural politics.

One remarkable example of the Pentecostal use of language as means of self-empowerment and self-conditioning comes from an opening montage to the broadcast sermons of Pastor Chris Oyakhilome, faith preacher and healer, and founder of Christ Embassy international



(aka Believers' Loveworld).<sup>6</sup> The 70-second montage was created from several of his recorded sermons where he was exhorting his congregation of the power immanent in the Word of God. His charge, from where I have extracted the epigraph above, circulated in various formats such as cell phone ringtones and as wall/car stickers.



*Figure 11 – A car sticker announcing the believer's politics*

As car stickers, people literally drive their faith through public spaces as part of the politics of Pentecostal contestation of the public sphere. They use car stickers to proclaim their social vision, project their religious identity as individuals and as groups, and reaffirm their faith.<sup>7</sup> Ogbu Kalu described the believers' practice of sticking their faith pronouncement on their cars as "bumper sticker hermeneutics."<sup>8</sup>



Figure 12 – Conviction is expressed through items that function as extension of the body.

Using the voice of the pastor as cell phone ringtone was equally instructive because the cell phone is a ubiquitous item of modern technology in Nigeria. Recent studies show that the cell phone is an extension of our self; frequent use causes our brain to incorporate phone functionality into our body schema. Thus, the phone becomes an extension of our bodies and our personalities.<sup>9</sup> For the Christ Embassy members who had the clip as cell phone ringtone, it was both a psychosocial and a political project of controlling public spaces and making it more pliable for their faith. Each time their phones rang, the incongruity of Pastor Chris' voice bursting out, "Don't stop talking it!" extends the notion of "church" from a fixed, spatialized space to a fusion of human and technology that proclaims a message and a personal politics everywhere it goes.

Pastor Chris' montage is significant, but not merely for the portability. Its rhetorical composition reflects how the Word of God is used to condition a believer and how the believer, for the most part, is the agent that carries out these disciplinary actions by him/herself. In the epigraph, which forms the text of the clip, Pastor Chris urges the congregation to "say" and "talk" the Word of God. His charge goes on to ask them to meditate on the Word for understanding and when they have found a scripture that connects with them, they should continuously reiterate the Word until it grows mightily (in them) and prevails. Before Pastor Chris goes on to quote verses of psalm 23, "...the Lord is my shepherd... I fear no evil...", he mentions that the Word of God "sets the course I *must* follow." The 'I' in his statement might have been referring to himself but the typical "call and response" format of the Pentecostal message makes the congregation repeat his words so the "I" invariably refers to them. This mutual transforming of "I" into "we" and "we" into "I" is a policing model of self and communal recreation. In church, people consider themselves a single entity - the body of Christ – and the integration of their bodies into a metaphorical whole helps them to collectively discipline themselves through the Word of God.

In the montage, the camera selectively focuses on certain members of the congregation reacting to Pastor Chris. Someone nods; others write in notebooks; another one jumps up and raises one hand to heaven with his mouth moving in prayer; a female is ecstatically rocking herself on her chair with her face and her mouth also moving in prayer; another woman on her seat nods vigorously and raises her left fist while mouthing “hallelujah.” The clip shows series of “spiritual exercises” that combine language and the body to exercise the body into believing. Here, language features as invocation, as performative utterances, and as a master script that “sets the course I (the individualized congregation) must follow.” These physical responses are a confirmation of the receptivity of their spirits to the Word of God. Their bodies accede to the words Pastor Chris utters on the altar through nods, writing, jumping and shouting, saying ‘amen’ and ‘hallelujah.’ They watch his body as he performs on the altar and they mirror his actions. When he is calmly teaching, they are sitting and listening. When he is animated and gesticulating wildly and shouting “yaaaay!” they do not remain in their seats either, they jump and shout with him as well.

I have deliberately used “spiritual exercise” to evoke imageries of bodies in a gymnasium where the discipline of bodies takes place through a repetitive imposition of challenging tasks. The term “spiritual exercises” came from the book, *The Spiritual Exercise of Saint Ignatius of Loyola*, a 16<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish priest who documented a series of meditations, prayers, and mental exercises to be carried out for a period of 30 days to help the believer grow their spiritual health. St Ignatius designed the exercises for the believer to get closer to God through a self-disciplinary process that reflects on the Word of God.<sup>10</sup> In my interactions with Pentecostals, I noted that they use the term to designate activities that involve Bible study/meditation, prayer, and other techniques that align their souls to be more receptive to the mind of God. Pentecostal

charisma, however, does not allow the monastic contemplation St. Ignatius prescribed for spiritual exercises.<sup>11</sup> Pentecostal worship, particularly in Africa, comes in more animated modes and charismatic expressions as demonstrated by Pastor Chris and his congregation – loud and raucous worship, singing and dancing, punctuating the service with shouts of ‘amen’ and ‘hallelujah,’ rolling on the floor, speaking in tongues, genuflection, chanting, and a frequent citation of the Bible in prayer and in speech. Spiritual exercises in the Pentecostal context are not typically somber but are excitable moments of “when you get a hold of it, keep saying it!” Pentecostal worship is an intertextual exchange between the body and texts, whether oral or written. As I will be consequently showing, through various “spiritual exercises” Pentecostal Christians absorb the Bible and its entire narrative. They “keep saying it” and “don’t stop talking it” until it becomes a part of their consciousness and sets the course they must follow in their daily existence. The Bible becomes a “supreme paradigmatic history through which they recognize new situations and even their actions.”<sup>12</sup> The Pentecostals’ enforcement of the Word in their own lives through contortions of daily behavior and comportments gradually shapes them into God’s subjects. Paul Gifford says of the ritual use of the Bible in African Pentecostalism,

The Bible is understood as a record of covenants, promises, pledges, and commitment between God and his chosen...It is a contemporary document; it tells of God’s promises to me. It tells my story; it explains who I am ...The Bible is much more authoritative about me and my destiny than my present circumstances. The Bible is covenant and commitment to me, and to me now.<sup>13</sup>

Other scholars like Kalu, Phillip Jenkins, and Stephen Land have variously studied the centrality of the scriptures to the African Pentecostal church and adduced a multiplicity of reasons Africans are fascinated by the Bible.<sup>14</sup> Jenkins states that, “for the growing churches of the global south, the Bible speaks to the everyday real-world issues of poverty and debt, famine and urban crisis, racial and gender oppression, state brutality and persecution. The omniscience of poverty

promotes awareness of the transience of life, the dependence of individuals and nations on God, and the distrust of the secular order.”<sup>15</sup> While they have accounted for the popularity of Bible in African Pentecostalism and how believers appropriate its truths to their present life, this chapter is invested in understanding how the scripture trains the body such that their existential praxis is an act shaped by their understanding and exegesis of the Bible.

In archival documents of Nigerian church history, there is an illuminating example of using sacred texts to exploit the malleability of the body and orient it towards subjectivity. In 1897, in pre-Christian colonial Yoruba society, an exasperated clergy of the Anglican church, Bishop Charles Phillips, expressed disappointment at the low reception of the Christian message among the people remarked in Yoruba thus, “I believe that when rote learners of Ifa (sacred oral text) stories discover that they can read the Odu (Ifa) in a book, they will seek literacy eagerly, gain the capacity to compare the Bible to Ifa stories, and discover on their own merit the superior text.”<sup>16</sup> His tactic of getting adherents of Yoruba religion to convert to Christianity lay in his understanding of text and embodiment. The Yoruba religious body was animated by the oral text of Ifa that illuminated people’s sphere of thought and their outlook on the world. Bishop Phillip, presumably a convert, thought winning Ifa adherents over to Christianity was not to discount the sacred text they had embodied but to get another text to contest with what they know and they would ultimately switch sides. Adeleke Adeeko says of this tactic,

Taking divination stories to be Ifá's main tool of mind control, Bishop Phillips recommended print dissemination of these narratives as a means of freeing the critical faculty of non-Christians from the shroud of secrecy (*awo*) with which Ifá priests deceived Yorùbá people through the ages. Print technology, he thought, would separate mystery (*awo*) from its curators (*babaláwo*). For Bishop Phillips, the deep secret of pre-Christian Yorùbá worship lay not in sculptured icons but in the reasoning that inspired divination stories. If the stories were converted to portable packages comparable to the Bible, the only book authored by the true God, then the theological errors of Yorùbá religion could be easily pointed out. In

a palpable, scripted shape, indigenous religious thought could be quoted, disputed, and exposed.<sup>17</sup>

If Bishop Phillips were to look back at present times, he would have found that he was partially right - disembodiment through literacy can indeed cause a sacred text to lose its power over the human imagination. In the case of African Christianity, it has also created new forms of embodiment by people who use the Bible text for religious rituals. Ever since literacy and print technology has democratized sacred texts, people have accessed it and used it for their own ends. Unlike Ifa texts that were controlled by a guild of Babalawo who mystified knowledge and oracular utterances, Christianity –particularly the Pentecostal variety- and its charismatic structure changed the rigid relationships of theological autocracy that invariably results when human agents mediate between the divine and humans. Pentecostalism promotes autonomy that states that any and everyone can access the power of the Holy Ghost and resolve issues spiritually as long as they have given their life to Christ. The Bible and its mass reproduction enable access to the power in sacred texts and individuals can select them to perform the rituals that can resolve their issues. The decentralization of authority that Pentecostal Christianity emphasizes is what some Pentecostal Christians describe as a “do it yourself” approach to the resolution of issues that require spiritual intervention. Pastor Daniel Olukoya of Mountain and Fire and Miracles Ministry, for instance, says they teach their congregation’s “hands to war and their fingers to fight.”<sup>18</sup> The sense of being individually empowered is exhilarating because it means access to the divine is almost certainly guaranteed, worship can be privatized, power can be individualized in the body of those who have received the Holy Ghost as Jesus promised at the Great Commission, and the orienting process that requires believers to immerse themselves in the religious experience gets deeper.

In the next sections, I will be using copious examples to elaborate more on the Word of God in Pentecostalism and how, in the performance of daily behavior, the believer works towards recreating his/her world using the Word of God. The Bible, as the Word of God, is “a significant index of Christianity”<sup>19</sup> and the material book is key to performance of Pentecostalism for several reasons. Number one is the scriptural belief that the world itself came into being through God’s performative utterance. The very first verse in the Bible says that at the very beginning of creation, there was darkness on the face of the earth. By verse three, the Bible says, “...And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light...” As it is reiterated over and over in church sermons, the supernatural ability to bring miraculous things into being rests on the logic of this verse: *let there be....and there was....* Things, phenomenon, and realities can be spoken into being through the performative power of language because of the power that had been granted to the believer through Jesus Christ. There are other verses in the Bible that affirm the power of spoken word to do, that is, to make a reality of what it refers. For instance, Psalm 18:21 says, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue...” and John 1:1 says, “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and God was the Word.”

Pentecostals believe the Bible is not just written word but in fact, it is living and it can rejuvenate their world because of the agency of the Holy Spirit. They believe that the words of the Bible, energized by the Holy Spirit, fuses both the Spirit and the Word into a wholeness evidenced by “anointed preaching, teaching and witnessing.”<sup>20</sup> Believers use language, particularly spoken, to affirm positivity, deny (or repress) an unwanted reality, and reiterate their desires until it is impressed on their own subconscious. Beyond the scriptures, belief in the extralinguistic power of words and its ability to command the energy latent in the atmosphere is also a core part of the indigenous African traditions. Jones says that in indigenous Yoruba



beliefs, the power of words to make things happen goes beyond language and “encompasses the will to expression.”<sup>21</sup> One of the greatest successes of Pentecostalism has been its ability to revive embodied beliefs of indigenous religions and connect them with Biblical traditions such that when people carry out certain religious rituals based on the Bible, the armature of their gestures and acts still come from indigenous religions. The values and ritual practices that supported indigenous religions and their beliefs, embedded in language through which they are expressed, thus form the foundations for contemporary Christian spiritual practice.

### **The Word Becoming Flesh: The Making of an Immanence**

Like Pastor Chris enjoins his congregation, the Word of God is God’s power placed on their individual tongues. By speaking God’s Word, they can command and control their realities, weaken oppressive forces against them, and emerge triumphantly. In addition, the Word of God inspires the script that sets their life course. The Pentecostal life scripts a new reality through the perlocutionary utterances of the Bible and which are actualized by the potency of the Word. Pentecostals perform their desired reality by renouncing –or denying- the reality that presently confounds them. To institute a new reality, they cite the Bible to confront situation using a courtroom mode of appeal to textual authority and the instances of precedents for what they want to be resolved. This rhetorical approach does not disturb the canon of the Bible, rather, it becomes the kiln where the new experiences they desire are forged. They not only create new meanings, new truths, or new realities out of Biblical narratives to either preempt unpleasant possibilities, or redeem an existing situation, or *apotropaic*, they also widen the borders of existing truths.

The Pentecostals' invocation of the Word in the ritual of worship collapses space and time to resurrect older accounts in Bible times situates the contemporary worshipper amid Biblical narration and tries "to bring that time – that prior moment- to the very fingertips of the present."<sup>22</sup> The drama is carried through, not by an isomorphic reproduction of Biblical myths but their own re-imagination of the account as demanded by the expediency of their current condition. Ideas and insights are considered inspired if they work to the worshipper's desire. The text is the fixed point from which these inventions are created but people act according to their own inspired imaginations, a major reason Pentecostalism has been successful in Africa.<sup>23</sup> Their familiarity with the Bible, however, should not be taken as an indication of their memorization of the Bible through mere rote learning.<sup>24</sup> Through techniques of discipline, dedicated learning, frequent citations, and a persistent desire for a relationship with God that is only attainable through deeper study and meditation, and other ritualistic acts enacted in prayer, they have embodied the stories and its essences as an immanence. Eventually, the creative process that derives performance initiatives from the Bible, reaching for culturally appropriated ways to bring about efficacy ends up as a process whereby "the Word became flesh." That is, the triadic components of the Pentecostal person – body, soul, and spirit- is constantly simulated with the Word of God until it becomes immanent and the body's way of being in the world is operated from this internal reality.

Pentecostals meditate on the Bible to destabilize existing narratives, shake out the mundaneness of worn and obvious stories, and perform a "new" and "non-textual" Bible that incorporates their existential realities. The deeper they meditate on the Word regularly, the more the Bible integrates into their consciousness making them sensitive to contending forces. To combat them, they turn to the Word they have absorbed as a weapon of spiritual warfare. The life

of the Pentecostal is that of a constant warfare with contending supernatural forces and as such, a constant meditation on the Word of God helps them to remain eternally vigilant and prepared. In the natural realm, the worldly battles of social and political angst are, due to the high stakes of survival involved for the Pentecostal, equally approached with “with the dedication of war; hence, the constant language and practices of spiritual warfare.”<sup>25</sup> This necessitates the Pentecostal mode of self-orientation: learning the various Biblical narratives, arranging them to fit an existential issue, uttering them to do things. The Bible is used to process life into a “gigantic metanarrative” and to frame the world for Pentecostals “in a great, all-encompassing code.”<sup>26</sup>

This is another point where Pentecostalism has similarities to indigenous religions. Both Christianity and Ifa divination system defer to a textual authority (encounter with the former began with the written text while the latter was mainly oral texts that were eventually transcribed). They also both appropriate myths from their canonical texts, arrange them in indicative and declarative moods of language, and utter them with expectations of ritual efficacy. Ifa divination is a central system in Yoruba because it has an intellectual bent to its operations: its discourse foregrounds an “objective graphematic approach to what constitutes an intellectual problem, the methods of analyzing them, and the means of teasing out solutions.”<sup>27</sup> Although Ifa and other forms of hypnotic or sacred poetry in Yoruba culture mostly oral while the Bible is mostly written, “the two meet when the Bible is read aloud.... The authoritative, universal, and timeless nature of the African proverbial narrative has been bested in the Bible, summoning all people to listen and obey.”<sup>28</sup> While they draw nearer to listen to the Bible, they also “hear” the grounded beliefs in the power of narrative and chant to reshape situations. Where both Ifa and the Bible diverge is where Pentecostal Christianity has a key advantage over indigenous religions

- the democratization of access and power. In indigenous religions, supernatural power is moderated by an elite guild of priests, Babalawos, who are consulted in the quest for a divine solution to problems. The performative utterances of Ifa are not readily accessible by everyone, unlike the Bible that can be mastered by Christians with any level of literacy.

The decentralization of authority that Pentecostal Christianity emphasizes is what my interviewees describe as a “do it yourself” approach to the resolution of issues that require spiritual intervention. One of the church services that I attended with a relative in Ibadan had a praise and worship session where the congregation ecstatically sang that they do not approach Babalawo (who use *ayajo* and *ofo*). *Ayajo* is not readily available to the non-initiate unless they attain a certain level of training and hierarchy in the guild of Ifa priesthood to activate the efficacy in the sacred texts. The authority is given to the Babalawos and those select few who have been initiated into the priesthood of the Orunmila deity.<sup>29</sup> Christians who claim they can work out spiritual solutions by themselves unlike those who follow Ifa religious system of beliefs, in reality, still defer to their Pastors as the authority that brings the Word and the thought of God to them. However, they believe that individual Pentecostals embody supernatural authority made possible by the Holy Spirit that came to live in them on the day of Pentecost.

These eidetic performances based on the Word are not mere escapism but spiritual exercises that seek to create presences from absences. “Absence” here means the non-materiality of biblical account that becomes real living history when a Pentecostal supplicant conjoins it with the absence of the desired reality in his/her own life. Thus, the supplicant stretches the scale of experiences from Biblical characters to him/herself in the present time and the adjoining of biblical history with their personal narrations from the node through which they access divine power. These scripting of future expectations using the Bible are as performances go, ephemeral

and expendable, frequently created to confront exigencies. The person they become –or hope to become- will at some point in the future, become a site of further recreation and regeneration. Therefore, the Word of God constantly constructs the truth of their world as they know it and as they live it. This constant renegotiation of the Word with their experiences are based on the understanding that the Word has power and can change lives or a situation when it is invoked (and there are many testimonies used to uphold this belief). It is remarkable how believers momentarily transform an aspect of the Bible into a new narrative, are themselves influenced by the story they have created, and yet believe that it is the Bible that has transformed their lives.

Gallegos attributes the fascination of Africans with the Bible to the oral/aural nature of African epistemology and which has found resonance in the Pentecostal use of the Bible in their worship.<sup>30</sup> The poetics of indigenous African religions were mostly oral and only recently transited to written forms. Long before they were transcribed, they were “standardized utterances”<sup>31</sup> which means, though oral, they were codified, memorized and recited with a high degree of faithfulness to the original text. Omission of any part of the recitation is considered a grievable offense among the religious adherents.<sup>32</sup> Like religions with written texts which have the advantage of certain fixity and standardization across time and space, oral African religious rhetoric maintained its deference to an oral textual authority which no Babalawo/Iyalawo, the priests of Ifa, could alter without being subjected to ridicule by his/her trained colleagues. The Bible, meanwhile, was mass reproduced and its availability gave Christianity an advantage of producing more religious subjects who imbibe it. Of this self-fashioning that results in the production of a particularly fashioned moral subject, anthropologist, Bruno Reinhardt says, “the goods, values, and experiences deemed normative to a religious and ethical tradition can be

thought of as internal to a set of prescriptive practices whose performance allows a specific type of subject to emerge in a teleological and generative fashion.”<sup>33</sup>

Technological advancements also make the process of immersion easier as they can access the Word on social media, carry the electronic version of the Bible around, download sermons, make the Word or their pastor’s vocalization of their phone ringtones, and slap their vehicles or their houses with countless stickers announcing their faith or prophetic declarations based on the Word. The depth of expressivity and creativity of Christians who embody the Bible has ensured that they take over the cultural landscape and indigenous religions that influenced some of their performances have not been able to catch up with the ways they have dispensed their sacred text. Scholars of indigenous religion say that the compelling power of incantatory poetry relies on the shared cultural knowledge of the speaker and the listener.<sup>34</sup> It is a testimony to the recreated habitus and the reshaped cultural imaginary of the African that the Bible is used to make declarative utterances, react to mystical forces that were conceived in indigenous imagination, sometimes appropriating the language of Ifa, without ever having to acknowledge provenance.<sup>35</sup>

### **Performative Utterances and Pentecostal Power**

In *How to Do Things with Words*, J.L. Austin writes about performative utterances, that is, spoken words that stand outside the realm of “true” or false statements, reported speech, or descriptive language. Performative utterances are illocutionary (or speech) acts; when they are uttered, they are an action in themselves or a part of the deed of an action. Such words, when uttered in appropriate circumstances and by authorized speakers, are doing something – changing a reality through either promises, command, declaration, or an assertion. For instance, when a

priest officiating a wedding pronounces, “I hereby declare you husband and wife” he is using his constituted authority to make two previously single people into a lawfully wedded couple. Using Austin’s speech-act theory, I will be studying the performative nature of Pentecostal religious language in prayer and confessional rituals. This segment particularly focuses on acts of prayers and similar rituals acts that do not follow the traditional conventions of prayers: such as kneeling in church and praying. I am looking at various acts of spoken language inspired by the Bible and which includes cursing, praying, declaring, prophesying (or *forth telling*), receiving (blessings), and “rejecting” undesirable situations- any of such acts that facilitate the ritual context through which people access God’s power and convey their inner desires.

Austin’s study on performative utterances has been extended to anthropological studies and scholars have examined the illocutionary force of performative utterances in both religious and non-religious rituals in and out of Western cultures. Ruth Finnegan, for instance, examined performative utterances in the social relations of the Limba people of Sierra Leone. She concluded that the non-literacy of Limba people notwithstanding, their use of performative utterances does not register the supposedly “symbolic” and “magical” use of language anthropological scholarship typically attributes to “primitive” people.<sup>36</sup> Benjamin Ray follows Finnegan’s lead in his study of the rituals of Dinka and Dogon of Central Mali.<sup>37</sup> He too argues that the instrumentality of language use among the Dinka and Dogon can be understood without consigning the people to an anthropological wonder. Other studies such as Emily Ahern’s analysis of Chinese rituals gauges both “strong” and “weak” illocutionary acts to understand how people negotiate ritual efficacy using language.<sup>38</sup> Meredith McGuire’s study of ritual language in alternative healing groups shows that ritual language is effective because it represents and objectifies power, transforms, and is performative.<sup>39</sup> These studies have engaged Austin’s study

of the illocutionary act and shown the anthropology of language and the ways cultures do things with words in religious and quasi-religious contexts.

In other studies that explicitly focus on language in religious rituals, scholars tend to focus on the context of the collectivity of those rituals. For instance, Robin Shoaps's anthropological study makes a linguistic analysis of the personalization of prayer and songs in Pentecostal churches, their charismatic nature and the earnestness of the ritual performances. While he argues earnestly that personal involvement in the corporeal and verbal sense foster the emotional involvement that brings down the presence of the Holy Spirit, his studies are based in the context of church services.<sup>40</sup> Bruno Reinhardt's study of Bible school students in Ghana who listen to their pastor's sermon on tapes while they prayed or spoke in tongue considers how the tactile quality of language can still touch us even in mediatized forms.<sup>41</sup> His study is close to my objective in this section: the power of language, in mediatized form, to penetrate the Pentecostal triformity of the soul, the spirit, and the body. The words reorient or indoctrinate the believer and their body, the part of them that connects worldly realities, enacts actions that are congruent with the words they have "soaked in."

Ashon Crawley's study of the rhetoric of black Pentecostalism examines the language of the sermon as means of policing congregants, disciplining them into a regime of conduct, and immuring them into a mode of being.<sup>42</sup> Like Crawley, I am also interested in the ritual language of Pentecostalism as a disciplinary regime that immures people into a code of conduct but at an individual level where they study the Bible for personal edification. Those are the times when they "get a hold of (the Word), "keep saying it", and not "stop talking (about) it." Along with individual spiritual growth, the church collective is definitely important, theologically, as the Bible urges people not to forsake assembly.<sup>43</sup> A believer, throughout his/her life, is dependent on



the church collective or assembly of fellow believers for edification and mutual strengthening. However, more scholarly attention has been devoted to the collective at the expense of how individual Christians enforce the project of becoming God's subjects through the rituals they carry out in both their personal and personalized public spaces. This chapter is interested in how Nigerian Pentecostals summon the Word of God immanent in them and, a la Austin, "do things with it" to re-script their reality. In changing existing reality through performative utterances, they also are changed by their frequent performance of the Word and this change affects their social and cultural circumstance. To this end, I will look at three things in this section: one, the orientating fallout of engaging one's body in these spiritual exercises; two, the Word of God as the performance of power; and three, the Word as a scripted guide.

The imperative of empowerment through ritual means stems from an African worldview of the interactions of the natural and the supernatural. According to scholar, Wole Soyinka, the Yoruba world consists of the worlds of the living, dead and the unborn, the three interlinked by the transition.<sup>44</sup> While Pentecostal cosmology does not have a similar delineation, African Pentecostalism considers the seen and unseen worlds as mutually permeable and that all kinds of activities and beings are constantly transmitted through these spaces. This understanding of natural-supernatural integration developed from indigenous worldviews and, historically, has haunted the Christian faith.<sup>45</sup> Historian, Kwame Bediako argues that "the African apprehension of the Christian faith has roots in the continent's primal traditions at the specific level of religious experience."<sup>46</sup> Prominent African church historian, Ogbu Kalu, also asserts that African Pentecostals are acutely aware of the unseen world and its realities as much as those who practice indigenous religions and for both, life is secured when one develops a relationship with the supernatural.<sup>47</sup> Theologian, Nimi Wariboko posits that the entire essence of African

Pentecostalism revolves around the “spell of the unseen.”<sup>48</sup> The mystic belief of Pentecostalism follows what Robin Horton describes as a “comprehensive apparatus for an explanation, prediction, and control.”<sup>49</sup> This understanding of mystical forces and their power makes the Pentecostal crave protection and counterbalancing power from transcendental forces.<sup>50</sup>

This Pentecostal quest for power to manage their realities results in their treatment of the composite triad of the body, spirit, and soul, as a link between the seen and unseen world. Allan Boesak asserts that our ideas of power arise from “concrete relations in our socio-historical world.”<sup>51</sup> Matthew Ojo has a similar observation: that Africans’ obsessions with supernatural power relates to the uses of power in their social relations and that “crucial to the life and activities of charismatic movements is the articulation and appropriation of new forms of power in very pragmatic terms to mediate and address the contemporary needs of Nigerians.”<sup>52</sup> Pentecostals dwell in a human world where the desire for the power that guarantees victory is conveyed through the registers of war and conquest – sobriety, vigilance, defeat, battle, power, victory, and a continuous activation of their faith as it strengthens benevolent spirits in their favor.<sup>53</sup> Their minds, constantly imbued with the Word of God is the antenna through which they link divine energy for righting what is wrong with their world. To achieve this, they take the Word as “the deed of God” and proclaim it to set its message into motion”<sup>54</sup>

As illustrations, I want to consider two forms of performative utterances as political praxis – the prophetic-declarative and the imprecative. The power of these utterances, and the things they strive to do comes from the political import of those words being spoken in the hearing of human and superhuman beings. Ruth Marshall aptly notes that “Charismatic truth is the only truth because of its performative, engaged, committed, and partisan position as a decision from Christ. Without this, it has no radically transformative power at all.”<sup>55</sup> The

transformative potentials of the Word of God, beyond the metaphysical effect believers attribute to performative utterances is its ability to contest and imprint itself on spaces whether corporeal, social, cultural, or political, or a fusion of all the aforementioned in the public sphere. The example of the prophetic-declarative performative utterances comes from things believers say *to* themselves, *of* themselves, and the politics of speaking these things before human and non-human others. For instance, Pentecostals reject undesirable situations by resolutely declaring, “I reject (insert sickness, poverty, or any similar unwanted condition) in the name of Jesus!” “I shall not be sick!” “I shall not die!” “I shall be the head and not the tail!” “I shall not be barren!”

People who refuse to speak reality of their conditions and say, “I am rich” even when they are evidently broke believe that there are supernatural forces in the atmosphere listening to our conversations and can make whatever we say of ourselves materialize. To affirm a reality that does not visibly exist is to manufacture the reality that will make it true. Saying, “I am rich” when one is materially poor means one has not only rejected poverty as a condition but is affirming an alternative reality that repudiates poverty. Those supernatural forces listening to one’s words will put a stamp on it and therefore the speaker will become poor. As nobody knows when those forces will leap on any words we utter, speech is endlessly mindful of its role of repudiation of unwanted realities, and a declaration of desires. These ideas are part of Yoruba spiritual imaginary, the thought of ears that listen from an otherworld and which could put Ase, or the force of authority, on language. Like I have mentioned earlier, Pentecostal behavior derives the scaffold of its imaginary from indigenous religions. Cultures that premise orality also believe in the metaphysical power of *all* rhetoric and as such, words are not flippantly used. Words are believed to stay in the atmosphere for many years after they have been spoken, awaiting an activation through human summoning by way of certain rituals.<sup>56</sup> In this instance, I

am reminded of growing up with my Muslim grandmother in Oyo in Southwest Nigeria in the 1980s long before Pentecostalism became a mainstream phenomenon. She always repudiated her material realities with her words. When other mothers cursed their children or talked about poverty or want, she spoke otherwise. She was a religious woman who took supernatural causality seriously and never spoke a negative word against her children. In contemporary times, this line of behavior is more common with Pentecostals and is often primarily attributed to the Biblical injunctions about the power of the tongue rather than the indigenous worldview that shaped my grandmother's understanding of the power of language.

In private moments of meditations, these performative utterances are ways Pentecostals use the power of the tongue on their own selves; they train their own spirits and souls to accept a different reality from what it sees; to see with their tongues and speak new realities into being. When Pentecostals say, "I cannot be poor because the Bible says I am blessed in Jesus Christ" or when someone who is (obviously) physically sick says, "The Bible says let the weak say I am strong. I am not sick, I am strong in the name of Jesus," they do not consider that they are merely "denying reality"<sup>57</sup> but are, instead, fashioning new ones. In interactions with others, these prophetic declarations do come in the form of using the Bible to counter the realistic assertions of the other party. What they do with their words is to suppress extant realities by implanting the new ones they have manufactured from their meditative study of the Bible. In one of the worship sessions, I attended in Christ Embassy church in Lagos some years ago where Pastor Chris ministered, his sermon consisted of telling his congregation, "We talk differently." As believers, he insisted, they do not have any business seeing things the way non-believers do and they should not conform their speech to fit into the rhetoric of this world but instead to work to stand out by speaking their words of faith. He said,

When men say there is casting down, we say there is a lifting up! Stop saying what your doctor said. Start saying what God has said! The Bible says we are crucified with Christ Jesus yet we live. That means the life we live in the flesh we live by faith in Christ Jesus. Therefore, sickness is not our portion. Say it out! I am the child of God, the seed of Abraham, the anointed of God. I cannot be sick and I cannot poor!

When they boldly proclaim these words in public, they use their words to try to bend others' subjectivity to theirs. They do not want to conform to the values of this world; those values, they believe, institute a reality they want to censor through their words. Therefore, they "talk different" and they do so with such boldness and vehemence to make others in the world forcefully accommodate the reality they see. They want their listener should suppress their own realistic objections to conform to the reality they, the Pentecostals, espouse. This subjective implantation of an inspired reality is not always mundane, it sometimes produces cultural implications that range from the ridiculous to the risky. In a chartered taxi in summer 2015, I struck up a conversation with a Muslim taxi driver who told me that the "Pentecostalspeak" was getting out of hand and annoying. He told me that a while back he had gone to the bank to withdraw some money. Typical of Nigerian banks, there was a long queue in the banking hall. He booked a space with the last person on the queue and left to take a phone call outside the bank. By the time he returned, the person he was supposed to follow on the queue had left so he turned to a woman in the queue who had not been there earlier and said, 'Madam I think I am ahead of you.' She snapped in return, "No, you are not ahead of me in Jesus name!" Then she proceeded to cite the Bible "I am the head and not the tail. I am always ahead!" A second example demonstrates the risky turn that these new realities can sometimes take. A consultant obstetrician and gynecologist, Dr. Oliver Ezechi, once narrated a story to a medical health journal blog,

Sometime ago, I had advised a couple about having a Caesarian Section because the baby's heart rate was not doing well during labour. The labour was prolonged as the mother had a borderline pelvis. They "rejected" it and discharged themselves against medical advice. Days later the couple came back to the clinic and boldly told me that God did it for them despite my recommendation. She proudly said 'I had a normal delivery'. They were mocking me but told them that as a professional, if I had another situation like theirs, I would make the same recommendations. As they were leaving I noticed that they did not come in with their baby so I asked, 'where is the baby?' They shamelessly answered that they believed that the baby was not their own as they lost the baby soon after birth. That God will give them their own. The couple lost two other babies in quick succession. They later came to their senses and now have three kids from CS.<sup>58</sup>

In both instances, the people were doing things with their words: They were proclaiming their subjectivity and trying to enforce inscribe their status as God's subjects onto the public space and others' consciousness. They repudiate a reality that does not suit their desires and they use the Bible as an oracular authority to inspire the speech that refutes the (perceived) empirical reality against them.

The imprecative performative utterances, on the other hand, are those spoken words of righteous indignation that do something: the war against oppressive forces. In this instance, Pentecostals use curses or language of imprecations to bring down forces they believe are against them. They dispense the authority they have as children of God to confront those forces through vocalized utterances. The language they employ in this ritual can vividly evoke imageries of violence and goriness – war, death, bloodshed, destroy, wipe out, scatter, and burn. As Wariboko also points out, the aggressiveness of Nigerian Pentecostalism is engendered by the sense of shame of incompleteness, need and insecurity, fostered by the Pentecostal spirit. To repudiate the body and along with it the shame it suffers in the material world, and prevent deviant (unseen) spirits from sullyng the body of Christ (the church), Pentecostal worship takes on the tone of conflict and violence. Their tongues thus haul "fire bombs to targets, and mouths project

glistening swords at enemies.”<sup>59</sup> Thus, it is unsurprising that people pray, using the Bible, to ask powers that stand against their destiny to be vanquished. For instance, an excerpt from the sermon of Pastor Daniel Olukoya of Mountain and Fire Miracles says,

The Bible says suffer not a witch to live. The death sentence on a witch signifies that that is the only way of stopping them. This is why you find so many situations in the Bible where God himself becomes a killer. There are plenty of things that need to die for many breakthroughs to manifest.... For the rain of blessings to fall on Israel, the prophets of Baal had to go. For baby Jesus to come back to his place of destiny the Herod there had to die. For Isaiah to begin to see the heavens open, king Uzziah had to die.<sup>60</sup>

Religious studies scholar, David Adamo, has provided a context-based validation for African Christians’ ritual uses of Psalm 109 in the Bible in their meditations and prayer. The chapter contains one of the most imprecatory verses in the Bible and throughout the 31 chapters, the psalmist unrelentingly curses at an enemy or the wicked ones who have wronged him,

When he shall be judged, let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin. Let his days be few, and let another take his office. Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg: let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places. Let the extortioner catch all that he hath; and let the strangers spoil his labour. Let there be none to extend mercy unto him: neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children. Let his posterity be cut off; and in the generation following let their name be blotted out.<sup>61</sup>

Western scholars have tried to “explain away” its existence in the same Bible that contains passages that deal with prayers of love and compassion but, Adamo, providing examples of Nigerian churches who urge members to use the Psalm as incantation and prayer., explained that curses are not about hate or violence, they are verbal weapons of self-defense and ultimate liberation from oppressive forces.<sup>62</sup> In the Bible itself, the performative utterance that killed Ananias and Sapphira, the couple who sinned by lying to God, was not about violence for its

sake but a pronouncement of judgment on the couple whose sin threatened the sacrality of the early church.<sup>63</sup> Some communities in Nigeria use material items as a semiotic communication to ward off thieves and other violators.<sup>64</sup> Curses, according to Kola Abimbola, are one of the spiritualized forces through which people bring about an end, demise, or disrupt the normative order.<sup>65</sup> Death pronouncements in imprecatory prayer is, therefore, the believer's request for an end to, or obliteration of, a confounding situation. Pastor Daniel Olukoya of the Mountain and Fire Miracles Church once tried to explain in one of his sermons, *Wherever, Whatever, has to die!* why they call for the death of their enemies through imprecatory prayers. He said

People don't even understand why we pray that things should die. Death has several meanings. Death means to stop living. Death means to lose force. Someone is using a power to fight you but all of a sudden, that power is removed... Death means to expire... If they say you are buying dead drugs in the market, it means that you are buying drugs that cannot work because it is no longer efficient. Death means to fade away... disappear...eradicate...to come to an end...<sup>66</sup>

The remarkable part of curses is that they are not merely uttered; they are spoken in a performative mode by people who have the authority (natural or acquired) over the person or situation they want to bring to subjection. As Rowland Abiodun said, without *ohun* (the voice and the right tonal modulation), *epe* (curses as a malevolent *Ase* or authority) would lack efficacy.<sup>67</sup> Scholar, Ade Dopamu says "an emphatic utterance" must be made in the presence of the person one wants to fall victim of curses. If s/he hears, the curse affects him/her; without hearing the performative utterance is null and void.<sup>68</sup> The emphasis on voicing is based on the belief at is because they believe that both natural and supernatural forces that listen for their words need to hear the rage, pain, hurt, urgency, anxiety, or fervency of their desires in their voices. For instance, in the various study materials and devotionals of the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministry have many such imprecations (see appendix B).



Without trying to discount the belief in the supernatural, I also think one other reason the person to whom the curse is directed needs to hear it pronounced is to instill in them the fear of retribution for the grief they have caused the person who uttered the curse. The fear economy is based on a cultural understanding of adjudication that transcends formal channels. People know that certain acts such as stealing could incur imprecations and hear the person they had robbed curse them is significant. The one on whom the course is placed would be haunted by the fear of accursed thus leading them to either madness or self-destruct. Beyond the supernatural audience or any other human listener at all, is also the self as a private audience hearing these words and filling one's subconscious with the sense of power and control over one's situation. When people say, "In the Bible, Goliath fell before David, therefore I command my problem to fall me in the name of Jesus!" the illocutionary effect of the "command and control" is to use the authority of the Bible to give the believer a sense of empowerment in the face of what would otherwise have been a helplessness.

### **The Bible as a Script, the Body as the Actor**

In this section, I examine the Bible as a script Pentecostals use to perform the trajectory of their life or, as Pastor Chris puts it, "sets the course I (the believer) must follow." The process of "following" the course set by the Word of God starts from birth, both natural and spiritual. I will examine the spiritual one first and demonstrate how it structures a course of life from natural birth through naming practices. The spiritual birth occurs at conversion when a believer becomes "born again" by reciting the sinner's prayer<sup>69</sup> or simply making the decision to follow Jesus Christ. The Bible itself says, "If any man be in Christ, he (sic) is a new creation. Old things have

passed away, behold all things have become new.”<sup>70</sup> The Bible represents this newness as a birth in which the believer becomes the child of God and s/he grows in the relationship with God that begins at conversion. From that point onwards, the life of the Pentecostal believer follows a teleological pattern structured by divine will and the Word of God. As such, Christianity considers the Biblical text as the ultimate source of power and authority and hermeneutics is a critical aspect of Pentecostalism.

African Pentecostalism considers the scriptures as God’s self-disclosure and they treat the Bible as “an indescribable effective power”<sup>71</sup> and a source from which oral performances such as preaching and prayer are scripted.<sup>72</sup> African Pentecostals particularly relate the Bible to their existential questions and therefore bring themselves, their socio-cultural worldviews, experiences, and culturally nurtured ideologies to reading the Bible. This explains why their readings are contextual, practical and reflective of pragmatic concerns.<sup>73</sup> When believers intone like Pastor Chris encouraged, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in the green pastures....,” they are effectively rewriting their existential reality through an oral narration of the Bible. In confronting circumstances with the Word, life’s vicissitudes such as poverty, sickness, barrenness, educational failure and a general social dysfunction is isolated from the social and political systems that control the structures of the society. Causality is redirected towards the spiritual realm where it is believed all knotty issues in the terrestrial realm are tied, and from where they can be resolved.<sup>74</sup>

In 2014, I had an interview with Harry, a friend who runs a home cell fellowship. Harry was contending for the governorship post in his home state and he narrated to me that God revealed to him and his wife, in separate dreams, that he would become the governor of his home state. Their church member confirmed the revelation through a prophecy based on the Scriptures

that God was going to elevate him, Harry. Harry told me he believed the dreams when an independent source confirmed it. Knowing that he had neither the influence nor pedigree of his fellow contestants, he took his case to God in a spiritual exercise that lasted days. He said God gave him a “word” based on the story of King David in the Bible who was essentially a shepherd boy tucked in the pasture, far away from the political capital of Israel. David did not hustle to become a king, God found him out and crowned him ahead of his older and even more experienced brothers. At the time, Harry was only a nominal politician but he got in line for the post in faith and began to attend meetings in his political party. He began to work towards contending for governorship post and his course of life became altered based on divine revelation. He said to me,

I prayed and told God to go ahead and fulfill His word. I reminded him of his Word in the Bible that says I only need to be still and I will know he is God. His Word says he will fight for me while I keep my peace. The battle is the Lord’s and he will reveal himself on my behalf.... Let me tell you, already things are beginning to happen. You know YYY? He was the candidate favored by the governor. Everyone thought he was going to be governor but he died. We don’t know what happened but he died. The next favored candidate, ZZZ, was shot during a scuffle with the governor’s political opponents. When the news first came out that he too had died in the hospital, I fell on the ground and began to roll all over the floor. I said, “God, you are too much! You are what your word says you are. Lord, am I this special to you? Am I your only child? How many people will you kill for only me? How many of them will you take out of the way for me to become the governor? What did I do for you to deserve you taking my battles personal like this?

My wife came inside and saw me worshipping God. When I told her what had happened, she joined me and we rolled on this ground together, praising God. We could not believe that things would work that way, that God would show himself with the force of power. Although we later heard on the news that ZZZ survived when he was flown abroad, and some people said he was never shot; that the incident was staged to discredit the opposition party. We still believe God that he will make it happen. He will not let his Word fall to the ground. He will do it and his name shall be glorified.<sup>75</sup>

To a non-believer, there might be ethical concerns with Harry's reasoning: his use of the Bible does not interrogate complex history, elides historical details and is ironically, amoral. The euphemistic way he characterizes the deaths of his fellow contenders for the governorship post, "taken out of the way" makes it seem like he thinks of people as pawns on the divine chessboard. One might even argue that he and his wife's dreams might have been propelled by their personal ambitions (thus making their subsequent spiritual exercises and scriptural invocation human attempts to anchor personal desires on biblical oracular authority). However, the Bible for him is a script that sets the path he would tread in the race for life. The Biblical precedence of God showing up for the weaker candidate inspired him to join the race, boosted his confidence that his desires have the potentials of realization. Even though he was entering the arena where he was shorn of clout and lacking a godfather or sponsor to help his dreams, he saw himself in a different light – God's candidate whose right to governorship was prefigured by historical narratives of God's similar doings in the past. His self-inscription into the divine agenda to emerge the favored candidate might directly contrast the Christian message of love, peace, and anti-violence but to Harry, it was God working in his favor just like He did for his elected several times in the Bible.

Harry's example does not mean Pentecostals treat every Bible character as an agent of history or supernatural design whose life is inscrutable. Pentecostals' *forthtelling* of their lives can be very critical and in fact, intellectual in approach. One of my interviewees, Brother Paul, who talked to me about misery making people forget who they are in the Lord narrated the story of Mephibosheth, the crippled grandson of King Saul who groveled before King David. David had usurped Saul's lineage and the grandson who was crawling before David could have been a king himself. Brother Paul, taking that story as an allegory, asked me seriously, "how could he

have forgotten he was the king's son and refer to himself as "dead dog"? May God not let us fall into a misery that will make us forget who we are." The Bible in the Pentecostal experience is an eclectic mix of language, body, and the storytelling imagination. Pentecostals select and revise stories for self-fashioning and self-writing because they believe the Bible has prefigured the life of the Pentecostal subject. They can, therefore, beat time and space to improvise on the events of history that reflect divine intervention in human affairs to reshape their present lives, how they understand and perform it. They consider themselves as agents who can rewrite the script(ures) if they have the *locus standi* (being born again and being the child of God).<sup>76</sup> Although the Word can produce desirable realities for the believer, a formulaic resort to the text without any charismatic vitality does not guarantee results and believers are therefore frequently urged to stimulate themselves through spiritual exercises. People, therefore, avoid turning the Word of into a static (or dead) reference through maintaining a close relationship with God. Pentecostals claim that a close relationship with God and his Holy Spirit helps one see into the Word with fresh insights.

People whose born-again experience script their lives from the beginning of their spiritual birth impose a scripted beginning on their children at the start of their natural lives through names. Yoruba typology of names can be classified into personal names, nicknames, family names, religious names, and omen-based names.<sup>77</sup> Typically, names in Yoruba culture are neither considered labels nor mere bearers of individual identity but a reflection of one's prayerful wishes for a child starting out in life with the expectation that the spirits watching over the child would make it happen. These names display internal semantic content because they reflect the condition of one's home or family at the time of the birth of the child, parental desires, or even motivation for naming such a child. Yoruba naming practice takes cognizance of the

metaphysical dimensions of bearing a name through life. As a Yoruba proverb says, “Oruko n ro ni, apeja n ro niyan.” That is, one’s name directs one’s conduct and what one is called determines one’s life. Niyi Akinnaso notes,

Any personal name which invokes unpleasant or negatively valued connotations is obligatorily avoided because the Yorùbá believe (i) that a child's name play some part in its development and future career and consequently (ii) that a child may react to a name having negative social implications.<sup>78</sup>

Names are such serious business because they have social and spiritual implications for the bearer; people change their names whenever they felt uncomfortable with their fortune in life. My non-religious aunt told me that her life changed for the better when she changed her name from Abosede (one born on a Sunday) to Mobolaji (I rise in wealth and nobility). This attitude is carried over into Pentecostalism such that people did not merely stop self-renaming with their first names; they began to change their surnames as well. Sometime in the 1990s, Yoruba Pentecostals who wanted to “make a complete break with the past”<sup>79</sup> began to alter their surnames to reflect their Pentecostal status and disengage from their ancestral roots that they believe is paganistic and therefore accursed.<sup>80</sup> As Yoruba surnames are markers of sub-ethnic identity and reflect individual family traditions and (indigenous) religious history,<sup>81</sup> this group of convert Pentecostals dropped their names to openly reflect their embrace of the modernity Pentecostalism offers. Birgit Meyer notes that Pentecostals desire for modernity is evidenced by their use of temporalizing language to represent African culture and history as the “past” which needs to be shed for a full self-realization in Jesus Christ.<sup>82</sup> Therefore, names like “Soyinka” (Wizard surrounds me) became “Oluyinka” (God of heaven surround me); Famuyiwa (The Ifa oracle has brought this one) became “Jesumuyiwa” (Jesus has brought this one); Ogungbemi (Ogun, the god of iron, has done me well) became “Oluwagbemi” (God has done me well).

This group of Pentecostals, when they give their children names in Yoruba, depart from the popular names like Aderonke (Royalty has this to care for), Temidayo (My life has become joyful), Titilope (My gratitude is eternal) and invent names that not only proclaim not only have the same grandeur as the energetic physicality of their embodiment, but also makes their children a living semaphore of their faith. The children bear Yoruba names such as Jesulayomi (Jesus is my joy); Tijesusnimi (I belong to Jesus); Jesutofunmi (Jesus is enough for me); Jesuferanmi (Jesus loves me); Jesutogbamila (Jesus is enough to save me); Oluwasemilore (The Lord has done me well); Agbaraoluwa (The Power of God); Oluwaseunbabaralayemi (The Lord has done something magnificent in my life); Oluwadunmininu (The Lord has made me happy); Aduragbemi (My prayers saved me). Sometimes, these names are not in Yoruba but they express the same politics.<sup>83</sup> They are names like Prayer, Winner, Testimony, Faith, Miracles, Rejoice, Praise, God's Power, Wonder, Divine, Hallelujah, Holy Ghost Fire, Kingdom, Power, Dominion, Amen, Victory, Prosperity, Marvelous, Salvation, Favor, Power, Success, Anointing, Anointed, Righteousness, and Perfection. Some churches encouraged their members to totally drop naming children "Junior" because it was considered prophetic – that child would always be the father's "junior" in an inferior sense. These parents reflect their faith in the power of the spoken word and the potential ways it can influence the course of one's life. Pentecostals who name their children this way typically point to the Bible as the source of their inspiration. They mention that God changed the name of Abram and his wife, Sarai, to Abraham and Sarah as a prophecy that points towards how their offspring will fill up the earth. When I was a member of Winners Chapel up to 2006, we lost count the number of times families with a boy and a girl child shared a testimony on the altar and announce they named them David and Faith after the presiding Bishop, David Oyedepo, and his wife, Faith. Beyond the affectionate bent to naming your child

after your pastor is also the belief that the grace upon the life of the great man of God and his wife would extend to the lives of their children.

The parents achieve a few ends by using names as not only a repudiation of the past but also a prayer for what lies ahead. First, they try to influence the course the child must follow through life right from the start by investing their names with spiritually laden content. A child named Winner is believed to become a winner through life and the child named “Testimony” is not only a living monument to the parents’ name, but is also expected to live a life full of testimonies. These names are the prayers and wishes these parents desire for their children and imposing it right from the outset means that it will determine the course of their life. Secondly, because Nigerian parents are typically addressed by their children’s names, a person who names her child “Winner” becomes ‘Mummy Winner’ and the Father of a child called Jesutofunmi becomes “Daddy Jesutofunmi.” They, along with their children, become joint bearers of these names that reflect the Pentecostal identity of the parents. Thirdly, these naming politics are critical to understanding how the public sphere becomes impregnated with Pentecostal ethos. In my growing up years around the mid to late 90s when Pentecostalism was still emergent, the names were considered laughable because they seem fanatical to us. These days, parents and their children bear the names and their moral disposition proudly. They gladly enunciate the names on the altar to the shouts of hallelujah by the congregation. As the Pentecostal culture widens outside the private sphere of the church, these supposedly private moral attitudes have become so normalized and as Asonzeh Uka observed, they seep into the Pentecostal habit of naming businesses too.<sup>84</sup> Such examples include, “Hallelujah Bakery.” “God is Good Transport Company,” “Divine Bottled Water.”” The generation of children that were given these names are growing up, and the myth of their names is producing the social effect of widening the



horizons of the Pentecostal subjectivity in the public sphere. This change impacts Islamic practices forcing them to a more charismatic mode of worship that appropriates Pentecostal repertoire of religious behavior.<sup>85</sup> For instance, some years ago I attended a Muslim naming ceremony in Ibadan and the Imam who named the child charged those in attendance to no longer name their children “junior” because “our children will be greater than us, they will never be our junior”!

### **Summary**

Believers’ acquired Pentecostal subjectivity of people that impacts public culture manifests in various forms of spoken and performative utterances. The interwoven components of language, body, and the Pentecostal imagination creates performances that are staged in the public sphere and which change the ethos of the public space itself. The effect of Pentecostals’ disciplinary techniques is the emergence of a subject whose intertextual interactions with the Bible has merged the body and the text, the two fusing into one a whole. The Bible is a narrative through which they create new and improvised performative acts that connect the Bible with their experience and history. The influence of Pentecostals is visible in various aspects of social and popular culture. The Word of God has played a remarkable role in promoting ideas that promise physical and material blessings that transcend mere human wisdom if believers can engage in spiritual warfare of “cutting the chains of captivity” that deny them access to capital.<sup>86</sup> Pentecostal subjects, tasked with the spiritual role of winning the world for Christ, launched these ideas into the public sphere and gradually implanted them into public consciousness. They achieve this by placing themselves within the text, surrogating themselves with Biblical actors in ahistorical, decontextualized, and transnationalized appropriation of universal mimetic patterns.

Thus, they re-narrativize their present experiences and hope to emerge the triumphant hero of their contending circumstances.

## Chapter Four:

### Panopticism and Pentecostal Theatricality

*The eyes that we do not see but which are watching us, may God protect us from them!* – Prayer during church service



Figure 14 – “Jesus is watching you even as he watches over you.”

In this chapter I will be investigating Godmentality, the Pentecostal subjectivity, through the prism of panopticism - the various forms of surveillance that inveigh on a Pentecostal body, catalyzes certain acts, and the ways those performative acts immure the body into subjective modes of being. The gamut of performances by Pentecostals, whether expressed through a widow morality to manipulate supernatural power in their favor or one that embodies the word to enunciate the power of rhetoric to produce certain desired realities for their lives, are all staged for a gaze. These continued performances progressively immune the body, locking it within

series of stylized acts that establish the Pentecostal identity. Pentecostal panopticism explores how natural and supernatural forms of surveillance determines moral behavior and upholds the normative content of Pentecostal ethics; how natural and supernatural forms of surveillance determine moral behavior, engenders certain creative performances of self-protection from threatening forces, and overall, upholds the normative content of Pentecostal ethics. Pentecostals have internalized the reality of the gaze and they regulate their behavior, actions, and worship rituals with varying degrees of an active consciousness of surveillance.

Michel Foucault's study of the evolution of institutional surveillance and its animating effects on the body highlights the panopticon, an architectural design of surveillance in prisons created by the social reformer and philosopher, Jeremy Bentham. The panopticon entraps the body in visibility as it functions as a remote-control device that compels self-regulating performances from the observed. The observed is conscious of being watched by an eye whose policing interest is to ensure compliance and conformity of behavior. The mechanism of panopticism induces in the observed, "a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power."<sup>87</sup> Foucault's analysis examines the machinery of the institutional gaze as omnipresent and omniscient power, capable of dissecting the body and subjectifying it through an intense knowledge of its constituents. The observed, aware of a remote surveilling eye, puts his/her body through a *self-controlling* discipline without any direct contact or prompting from the gaze. The power of the Panopticon relies on disciplinary mechanisms to function independently of the creator and to see without being seen in return. Bentham's architecture would inspire cultural imaginaries about a powerful singularized universal surveillance with the visibility to control the behavior of the surveilled through the dominant power of its gaze.<sup>88</sup> Surveillance studies since Foucault have investigated panopticism

through the disciplines of cultural phenomenology, political and social philosophy, literary analysis, sociology, economics, technology and digital culture, utopianism and dystopianism, identity politics, and other sociological paradigms that analyze the procedures of power in contemporary society.<sup>89</sup>

Art historian, Astrit Schmidt-Burkhardt's study of the history of western visual culture explains that the eye became the "dominant paradigm of cognition" and the mediating organ between the self and the world through visual representations of divine omniscience.<sup>90</sup> These artistic representations of God's all-seeing eye would become a "stereotypical image which devout Christians became conscious of and which interpellated the regime of surveillance."<sup>91</sup> Schmidt-Burkhardt's study highlights the historical trajectory by which the emblematic eye became an anthropomorphism of God or god-like structures of power. The eye as an emblem of surveillance has found its way into secular political and social culture and has become an insignia of surveillance. In this chapter, I am concerned with a panoptical surveillance that does not tie directly to government or considered abstract human representations of political power and control mechanisms. Taking it further, I am going to be studying a population for whom the eye as a symbol of remote surveillance is neither an abstraction nor a metaphor, but ties deeply into the core of cultural, religious, and philosophical beliefs.

While surveillance in contemporary western history has transcended the singularity of the eye and the procedures of power "move in numerous diverse and rich ways,"<sup>92</sup> the anxieties of government surveillance and state invasiveness into people's personal spaces in Nigeria/Africa is currently not an existential issue. One of the contradictions of Nigeria as a modern state has been to successfully count and account for its citizens. Rather than using modern technology to create systems of surveillance, Nigeria is -as professor of literature, Harry Garuba, once puts it- a state

that “actively seeks not to know” the details of its citizens.<sup>93</sup> The reality of surveillance to Nigeria, however, takes a more metaphysical dimension especially among religious people who believe in the reality of an unseen world that adjoins the material one. The phrase, “monitoring spirits,” in Nigerian Pentecostal patois refers to supernatural forces (or the bodies they possess) that aggressively surveil the lives of Pentecostals to do them harm.

The notion of the monitoring evil eye from the supernatural realms is a staple of Pentecostal prayer and they are regularly reproduced in spiritual discourses. From three different websites of the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministry that belong to their church parishes in Los Angeles, USA, Finland, Europe, and North America women’s fellowship, I culled prayer points that encapsulate the anxieties of remote supernatural surveillance. In each of the instances that I have reproduced below, these Pentecostals are concerned about these magic mirrors hidden in remote places and capable of bringing up their images.

Let any evil monitoring mirror ever used against me under any water, crash to irredeemable pieces, in the name of Jesus.<sup>94</sup>

Any power calling for my head before evil mirrors, die with the mirror, in the name of Jesus.<sup>95</sup>

Every evil monitoring gadget, remote control devices and every witchcraft coven assigned against my life and destiny, be destroyed by the Holy Ghost fire, in the name of Jesus... Every spiritual screen and radar, spiritual mirror, spiritual tape, spiritual camera, spiritual satellite and all spiritual properties that Satan has set to monitor me, break into pieces, in the name of Jesus.<sup>96</sup>

In the third of the instances in the epigraph, spiritual monitoring gadgets also include other modern objects such as screen and radar and satellites. This shows that the Pentecostal imagination is ever open to absorbing appurtenances of modernity in its immediate environment and incorporating it into the performance of its rituals.

The indigenous African world believes in the contiguous reality of the unseen world – that there are forces, benevolent and malevolent, watching and taking note of everyone’s acts on earth and human actions are being observed by this unrelenting gaze. This belief results in performances that progressively confine the body, subjectively wedging it into a behavioral mode prescribed by the religious code of conduct. The idea that unseen malevolent forces can surveil human activities also dredges up fear in believers -the fear that they would be viewed by an evil eye that would cause them harm. In the next sections, I will be elaborating on Pentecostal panopticism by looking at the transactions of the procedures of power in the supernatural realism of representing the omniscient supernatural eye. What presuppositions about the eye arises in Pentecostal performances for the gaze and how are they displaced onto a personified gaze? How, when and why does the gaze become desirable? How do surveillance and the phantasms of power fit into the fantasies of the gazed about the nature of the one who gazes? What ideological underpinnings of surveillance become visible when Pentecostal perform for the gaze? How does the representation of the gaze in the media reflect the transactions of power between the cultural producer and the cultural consumer? These questions will shed light on the politics of the surveillance in Pentecostal cultural imaginary, and why believers need to perform their subjectivity when under the gaze.

My first example is from the text of a 1990s popular Nigerian Christian TV drama, *Agbara Nla*, and how the will to trump *the spectral other* played out through the overlapped fabrications of both cultural knowledge and presumptions of the religious “other’s” secrets of supernatural power. The fictive representations from the drama have lingering influences and they continue to shape notions of panoptical surveillance in Pentecostal imaginary. Pentecostal spirituality and faith performances revolve around “the spell of the invisible,” how the fear of

what cannot be seen conjures fear and causes the Pentecostal to frame his/her the neighbor in a negative light.<sup>97</sup> The face of the neighbor reflects “the unformed image, the disastrous Hegelian “Night of the World”” and as such, the neighbor is an unknown radical other, “an impenetrable core, mysterious and elusive.”<sup>98</sup> My second example is an analysis of a “faith” wedding that took place in Winners’ Chapel, Enugu in 2005 and which explores the fantasy of the surveilled. Pentecostals also meet human and superhuman gazes through the culture of public testimonies and habits of self-surveillance. The reality of supernatural beings staring at human bodies on the earth from a remote location turns the Pentecostal subject into a spectacle for this disembodied Other’s gaze.

Like Bentham’s panopticon, Pentecostals do not “see” who is gazing at them since God is considered a spiritual being but they are acutely aware of its presence. Just as indigenous African religions generally believe in the reality of a contiguous other world, Pentecostal Christianity is also haunted by the mental image of God as “Big Brother” watching over the world. There is no reality for the Pentecostal outside the gaze of the watchful eyes of the omnipresent and omniscient gaze of God. However, in the place of an antagonistic foreboding ruler of a dystopian world of *1984* is the idea of God as the benevolent father whose gaze is soothing, not hostile. He is not a passive or disinterested voyeur; he is actively watching *over* his children. The gaze is totalitarian and its inescapability expressed by the Psalmist in the Scriptures,

Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, Even there Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will lay hold of me. If I say, "Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, And the light around me will be night," Even the darkness is not dark to You, And the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike to You.<sup>99</sup>



The Psalmist understands that the gaze precedes his existence in the world and its totality exceeds human spheres; it extends through the unwallled borders of the entire cosmos. This Psalm suggests a mutual and reassuring relationship between the surveilled human and his omniscient God; that the human character is at ease with God's omniscient gaze bearing down on him/her. The Psalmist does not consider God gaze's as threatening, he, in fact, adores and reveres God for his omniscience. The gaze, to the Psalmist, is not a remote ogling eye in the sky but a presence craved as a route to victory in this life and hereafter. Bentham specifically used this verse to epigraph his design promoting an idea of a "secular omniscience" that would be perfectly acceptable within the religious context in which he lived.<sup>100</sup> God, as Pentecostalism reiterates, is not the only one who watches human activities from an "other" world. There are other malevolent forces, both disembodied and the ones that have possessed human agents, all of whom surveil human lives. The gaze of the devil, or that of his demonic agents, are therefore antagonistic and are meant to be overcome by the believer.

### **The Eye of God, Devil's Magic Mirror, and Supernatural Surveillance**

In western cultures, the eye represents various iconic symbols of omniscience that are no longer immediately related to religious cultural history – justice, law, and divine surveillance.<sup>101</sup> The eye, as an instrument of cognition, is now a symbolism of visibility, surveillance, power and control. Aided by technology, surveillance from a "commanding view" offers means of power and domination, as well as a voyeuristic pleasure to the gazer.<sup>102</sup> As contemporary surveillance studies explore the distance between the eyes that see and the eyes that see itself being seen, they reflected on the antagonisms of the eye and its twin "other." Judith Butler's analysis of the 1989 beating of Rodney king and the subsequent trial is an example. Questioning the validity of the

eye as an independent witness, Butler shows that a racially saturated field of vision determines what can or cannot appear within horizons of perception.<sup>103</sup> Nicole Fleetwood makes a similar argument as Butler: that the field of visibility, the distance between our eyes and the black body, and the ontological “darkness” in between reinforces its own representations.<sup>104</sup> Franz Fanon describes the self-fragmentation that occurs to the surveilled black (male) body held under a white determining gaze as “solely negating.”<sup>105</sup> David Lyons characterizes the “eye of God” and the imperative of governing people through information about them as consequent of modernity. Governance in modern society is predicated on knowledge and the will to know has necessitated a relentless technologically-aided surveillance “powered by Christian impetus or motifs.”<sup>106</sup>

The “eye” as a mode of supernatural surveillance is a cognitive paradigm borne out of embedded primal beliefs. This surveillance aesthetic features in contemporary film culture- both Christian and non-Christian- latching on to latent fears and contemporary insecurities. Though the idea of an omniscient power that can transcend space and time to “see” human activities are common in Yoruba/Nigerian films, I am looking at the construction of panopticism and notions of power in a popular Christian television drama of the early 1990s, *Agbara Nla (The Ultimate Power)*. African Pentecostalism features the “constant interaction with the pre-existing, African spirit world, western culture, and the Christian message”<sup>107</sup> and through *Agbara Nla*, Christianity engaged indigenous religion to contend for domination of the public sphere. The drama, by known Christian theatre company, Mount Zion Faith Ministries, was a major hit when it was broadcast on television in 1993 and this could be partly attributed to its engrossing storyline, the morality lesson it offers, the novelty of a Christian drama with a complicated narrative, and the “spectral affects”<sup>108</sup> the drama employed to stage some supernatural scenes. As a pre-teen growing up in Ibadan when it was first broadcast on Broadcasting Corporation of Oyo state, I

recall that *Agbara Nla* was a major TV production that every family watched in the evenings. Since there were only two television stations in Ibadan at the time, *Agbara Nla* had no competition for air time and it penetrated many homes and many hearts with the piercing power of mass media. So successful was the drama that when it broadcast after the 7:00 pm news, the streets would thin out as people rushed home to watch the broadcast. The production company would later make the English language version for distribution among non-Yoruba speaking audiences.

*Agbara Nla* tells the story of an evangelist, Kola and his wife, Bose, both of whom were faced with the option of following God's direction by going to a rural and remote village, Muwonleru (meaning: ensnared in slavery) to deliver an anguished people who were held captive by occult power. Alternatively, Kola could accept a promotion at work that would take him and his wife to Abuja, Nigeria's federal capital. Kola was initially divided between his choices but his wife prevailed on him to choose the latter pointing out how the new job would greatly improve their material well-being. Kola opts for Abuja and God chose another couple, the obedient Olaboye and Olatomi, to carry out his assignment. Olaboye and Olatomi arrived in the village and soon began to undo the works of the devil carried out by an occult leader called Isawuru. Isawuru, we are shown, operates using the supernatural powers of Aro meta (a trio of mystical women who can turn into birds and fly through natural and supernatural spheres; Olori egbe (head of a supernatural cult); and Ayaba Oluweri (the wife of the king of the sea). Both Olaboye and Olatomi run against Isawuru who could not understand the mystery behind the power the couple uses to release the people he had supernaturally enslaved. Isawuru began to lose the reverence his mysticism had accorded him among the villagers because of a certain "Jesus" and his power to save.

The turning point in the film came when Isawuru wanted to destroy both Olaboye and Olatomi to redeem his dignity and regain his status among the villagers. He went to his “power room,” a shrine within his house. He brought out a glass mirror of about two feet long, chanted incantations, and invoked the image of the couple. Both Olaboye and Olatomi appeared in the mirror as still images. Isawuru shot them with a Dane gun and blood spattered across the shattered fragments. Satisfied that he had vanquished his enemies, Isawuru heads for their house to rejoice at their deaths only to see the couple were not only still alive and well, they had no inkling whatsoever of what he had tried to do to them. Disappointed, he goes back to his house where he consults another magic mirror (this one, a piece of white cloth hung on the wall) and from it, he demands to know who Jesus was and why he had so much power. A clip of the Hollywood film, *Jesus Christ of Nazareth*, appears in the “mirror” and Isawuru sees the scenes that depict the passion of Jesus – the painful and tortuous journey he makes to Calvary. Isawuru, watching the clip, comments on the action on the “screen” throughout, wondering why the character in the story had to go through so much agony. Then, a voice comes into the room and says, “I am Jesus, the Son of the Living God.” Isawuru was so affected by the scene that he begins to dismantle his paraphernalia of spiritual power while declaring that no other power he had known was like that of Jesus. After he has gathered all his “occult” material, a light comes from heaven and he is struck blind.

Isawuru manages to find his way out of the room, and outside his house, he asks a child to lead him to the house of Olaboye and Olatomi where they pray for him. His sight is restored after prayer and he gives his life to Jesus Christ. To further signal the notion of a new beginning, Isawuru changes his name to Paul Esupofo. The choice of the name, “Paul,” a gesture to a similar character in the Bible, Saul, whose conversion occurred after an encounter with Jesus. In

the Bible, a light from heaven also struck Saul and he became blind. After he had given his life to Christ, Saul received his sight. Saul changed his name to Paul and he became one of the key apostles of Jesus Christ and a vanguard of Christian expansionism. The name “Esupofo” (the devil is vanquished) however, has other political implications (which I would explain later). Isawuru, now a Christian, begins to reveal the workings of the powers of darkness to Olaboye and Olatomi, and they channel prayers appropriately to dispense of the power of evil. Isawuru spends much of his time as an evangelist now fighting off his old companions who appear to him in dreams and in embodied forms, excoriating him for rupturing their relationship.

In the city, Kola and Bose have become successful but have also been swallowed up by the ethical and moral corruption that pervade Abuja. Bose befriends a rich and successful woman who spoils her with gifts and requests a blood covenant from her. Bose soon finds out that the woman was a devil incarnate and when she tries to pull out of the relationship, she is afflicted with a sickness that defies western medicine. Bose becomes possessed by a demon who speaks through her body, yelling “Aya matanga!”<sup>109</sup> The voice of the demon echo with multiple other voices that suggests her body was inhabited with a legion of demons. The doctors asked Kola to take Bose back home because they had exceeded the limits of the ability of western medicine. At some point, Kola loses his job and everything the couple had acquired. He eventually becomes blind. Bose’s pastor tries to exorcize her but God told him the deliverance was an assignment he had reserved for an old man in the village of Muwonleru. The pastor travels to Muwonleru to fetch Isawuru (now Paul Esupofo). Back in Lagos, the demon in Bose saw the Paul Esupofo as he was leaving the village with the pastor, Olaboye and Olatomi, and begins to get agitated. The prayer team arrives in the city and Paul Esupofo enters the room where Bose is kept. After a spiritual battle of prayer and Bible citations, and resistance by the demon spirit, Bose is finally

“delivered” of her demons. At the end of the play, both Kola and Bose head for Muwonleru to complete the assignment God gave them in the first place. At the edge of the village, the husband’s sight is miraculously restored.

The drama series, according to O.O. Ogunbiyi, marks a “supremacy struggle between African Traditional religion and Christianity” and marks Christian religious bigotry because of the way it undermined Yoruba beliefs.<sup>110</sup> Funke Ogunleye does not acknowledge the violence of portrayal of indigenous religious beliefs in her defense of Christian drama films. Instead, she claims Christian evangelical dramas are in fact an evangelical Christians’ responses to the portrayal of Christian virtues as outmoded and irrelevant in a modern world.<sup>111</sup> This constant tension between Pentecostalism and indigenous religions, according to Harvey Cox, is due to their contiguity. Their interaction is the result of cultural retainership as Pentecostals recover elements of their indigenous religions threatened by modernity.<sup>112</sup> For Akin Adesokan, the premise of *Agbara Nla* was based on “the figuration of spiritualism, the resolution of conflict through religious deliverance, and it has an important consequence for the management of extra-materialist spectacle in the video films.”<sup>113</sup> While the film scholars that have addressed *Agbara Nla* have adequately commented on its popularity and cultural influence, I explore its spectacles and its iconic presentation of ocularity, surveillance, and controlling power. European philosopher, Slavoj Žižek says one of the ways to dislocate and disable an ideological edifice is to locate that moment in the frame of activities when an act is performed for a gaze.<sup>114</sup> For *Agbara Nla*, the acts performed for the gaze is encrusted with symbolic meanings that reveal the politics of Pentecostal panopticism.

The intricacies of *Agbara Nla* evoke embodied cultural beliefs about the ability of the supernatural eye to encroach private and hidden spaces to gaze on people, places, and cultural

beliefs. Mount Zion Film Ministries, the makers of *Agbara Nla*, arrogated to itself the power to constitute indigenous religions through mass-mediatized representations. In addition to its antagonism of indigenous religions, *Agbara Nla* also demonstrates what theologian, Nimi Wariboko describes as “the “impossibility” of *equal* relationships between believers (those who can see the phenomenal veil; power-seeking Christians) and unbelievers (those who cannot see behind the veil; powerless Christians).”<sup>115</sup> By radicalizing the grace the Pentecostal has received, s/he sees his/her neighbor not as an “other” to be loved by him/herself but a monstrous “thing” possessed by evil spirits against whom they must war.<sup>116</sup> *Agbara Nla* represents the Pentecostal imaginary that hunts down the “other” with the righteousness imbued on him or her with the book of Ephesians 6:12- “for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”

One might argue that *Agbara Nla*, in fact, follows a long series of a chain of historical and cultural continuities and discontinuities in popular performance when it presented the born-again imaginary that, “in elaborating a complex and contradictory economy of miracles, inscribes itself within occult forms of accumulation and power.”<sup>117</sup> The development of modern Yoruba theatre owes to the long historical traditions of traditional masquerade performances.<sup>118</sup> What subsists today include its splinter formations that deviated into the church and secular performances. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century when Nigeria was still a British colony, theatrical entertainment became a church initiative; part of a project of self-retrieval of the elite colonized subject who, despite being socialized into the colonial culture, still desired to be entertained with indigenous art forms. The church was a viable space for performances of indigenized western art because the Nigerian audience who had come to Christianity did so from a background where the borders of

religious rituals and theatrical performances were unpatrolled by formal delineation of genres.<sup>119</sup> Church services became an imbrication of liturgy and entertainment, and from a series of historical events grew the secular Yoruba theatre.

At the early stage of Yoruba theatre culture, traveling troupes like that of pioneer, Hebert Ogunde, infused cinematic elements into their stage dramas to convey supernatural realism more authentically to the audience. By the time they progressed to filmmaking, the representation of the supernatural had become a basis of their content. Over time, Yoruba dramas on television became a “celebration of the natural supernaturalism of the Yoruba worldview plus the occult means of tapping into it, and the hypnotic poetry that goes with both...”<sup>120</sup> There are several Yoruba films and TV dramas such as *Arelu* (1987), *Yaponyanrin* (1989), *Koto Orun* (1992) that demonstrated supernatural power on television. Almost all the dramas featured rural settings and projected “accustomed menus of *juju* contest, village squabbles between a conclave of witches and vulnerable masses.”<sup>121</sup> The constant representation of this depiction of supernatural power resulted in a self-reinforcing “techno-religious realism”<sup>122</sup> and consequently, “the boundary between the supernatural and the natural, always thin but distinct in Yoruba cosmology, became blurred on television. Worse still, illusion supplanted imagination.”<sup>123</sup>

When *Agbara Nla* debuted, it dredged up the imageries that these Yorubas dramas (some of them in fact produced by artists who identified as Christians) had ingrained into the cultural imaginary but used them for its ends of Christian evangelical conversion. Achieving the ends of injuring indigenous religious beliefs and their notions of supernatural power required casting them as the spectacular monstrosity that can be subdued by the idealized representation of the Christian God who embodies “the ultimate power.” The whole idea of “Agbara Nla” or “the ultimate power” presupposes that other systems of belief have inherent performative power



except that the “ultimate” one belongs to the Christian God. This arrogation of ultimate power to the Christian God is significant because it explains why Pentecostalism frequently tussles with the “spectral other” in prayer and other rituals of faith. *Agbara Nla* unabashedly fabricated what it considered indigenous religious practices using the raw materials supplied by prior mediatized representation of power in indigenous religions. An example of this manufacture of what the Christian filmmakers imagined indigenous religion *to be* was the awkward incantation chanted as metaphysical or hypnotic poetry in the 13 episodes of the drama. Unlike actual incantations chanted in non-Christian Yoruba films, the invented lines in *Agbara Nla* came across as stilted, inorganic, and inauthentic.

However, underlining the supremacy battle between the Christian God and the gods of African traditional religion was the symbolism of sight and omniscience. The power of indigenous religious, according to the film, was predicated on its ability to see the realities that are beyond the human eye. While the villagers believed in the supernatural forces around them, they could not “see” the mystical forces that Isawuru could both see and with whom he interacted on a plane that was beyond their human senses. Like Babalawos in indigenous drama, Isawuru had a “control room” where he stepped into to access extra-material elements with which he resolved things in the natural realm. When he throws an object at the white cloth on the wall while uttering incantations, images would appear and he could “see” through any murky issue. A similar aesthetic of supernatural surveillance features in non-Christian movies through material items such as a mirror or water, and they are a product of indigenous beliefs about supernatural power able to transcend time and space with their spiritual eyes. Since supernatural forces are disembodied, and they take on human forms to access natural spaces, it is also believed that seeing the spiritual world requires certain reflective materials such as a mirror, clear water, or a

piece of white cloth. In a Christian film, however, these panoptical devices are placed in the hands of antagonistic spiritual forces whose ability to “see” threaten Christians’ well-being.

Isawuru had the power to access other people’s spaces through time from his remote location, and the drama projects this ability as consequent of dark arts and power. God, as the extra-diegetic character in the drama is the ultimate omniscient who could see farther than any occult power because unlike the occultic gods, he is not terrestrial-bound. He also occupies a remote location but his space is not a room, it is imagined as a celestial abode from where he overlooks the entirety of human activities. Soyinka has argued that this celestial-terrestrial divide has been one of the internal tensions of African Christianity. African religions think themselves as part of a cosmic totality and their “gravity-bound apprehension of self, was inseparable from the entire cosmic phenomenon.” Christianity relocated the notion of God from the “underworld to a new locale up in the sky, a purgatorial suburb under the direct supervision of sky deities.”<sup>124</sup> The placement of God in the sky also implies that the Christian God has a viewing angle that extends farther than the surveillance capabilities of indigenous gods. While this is prejudicial, the idea that the Christian God has the whole world in his hands emphasize his magnificence and power over all other gods. That is why in *Agbara Nla*, the occult forces were depicted to be able to see beyond time and space (for instance, the demon that possessed Bose could see that there was an evangelist coming from the village that could exorcise her and was subsequently threatened). However, none of these dark forces could match the range of God whose power to see transcends time and space is consequent of his occupation of heavenly heights.

The Christian God is also represented as the light (as Jesus said, I am *the* Light of the world) and pitched against indigenous gods who are agents of (supposed) darkness. From His height, His eyes bore into the dark and remote places inhabited by shady characters that threaten

the wholesomeness of the Christian. The notions of darkness and light in religious imaginations, historically, have synesthetic implications: indigenous African religions have been projected as “darkness” (legacies of the Conradian “heart of darkness,”) and this metaphorical index that aligns barbarism, evil, violence and occult acts with the hue of the African skin has been used to justify racialized violence. Christianity on the other hand is projected as the “light” shared by the people of “light-skinned” race that are capable of civilizing and washing the darkness away.<sup>125</sup> The construct of indigenous African religions, the negative “Other” of western Christian religion reiterates the message of colonialism: “the dark continent” of Africa requires the *en-light*-ened other to penetrate it.<sup>126</sup>

The Christian God (who represents light) could trump the indigenous power Isawuru embodied because of the wider sphere of his omniscience and his ability to pierce through the human body to reach even the interior of people’s thoughts. The Bible reiterates that the eyes of God surveils the length and breadth of the earth so that he might act on behalf of those whose hearts aligned with Him.<sup>127</sup> His encompassment of multiple temporalities and imbricated corporeal and geographical spatialities pertains to the realism of supernatural surveillance: God’s eyes do not merely see the body but also pierces the human innards. The omnipotence of God is not merely based on the information He gathers because of his omniscience but because he can bend the future to structure events according to his desires. For instance, he not only saw the disobedience of Kola and Bose ahead of their refusal to take up the assignment he gave them, he already prepared surrogates who would manage Isawuru’s conversion. Isawuru would, in turn, deliver Kola and Bose and lead them to Muwonleru to take up the mission they had snubbed. In the end, God was not stranded and He triumphed. The occult power, embodied in Isawuru and the demon that possessed Bose, however, did not have such breadth of vision. Their eyes were

supplemented by magic mirrors and other material items which were limiting. Isawuru's character, meanwhile, was a reproduction of the caricature of Babalawos in popular culture imagination – his costume was adorned with magically potent items such as charm and amulets. The Christians in the drama, however, had no such materialist exhibitionism of battle gear; their weapons were the Bible which they were either reading or citing and of course, prayer. Their non-materialistic power signals their non-limitation, a factor due to the omniscience of their God. Their God has every information at his disposal and can direct them through his indwelling Holy Spirit. Thus, the Pentecostal body is unlimited.

The drama was also significant for its circuitry of Pentecostal power through the transitory routes of urban and rural spaces. There has been a consistent demonization of rural areas in Pentecostalism and a valorization of the urban as space of light, redemption, and modernity. The rural area in popular culture is typically treated as a “bush” or unpenetrated jungle where resilient and lingering ancestral African spirits (in both figurative and supernatural senses) predominate and threaten the well-being of “enlightened” city dwellers. Simon Coleman remarks that “Pentecostalism in Nigeria is often deeply rooted in idealized imaginaries of the city and demonizations of the rural.”<sup>128</sup> Asonzeh Ukah aptly notes that in Pentecostalism, “rural environments and countryside represents the domains of malevolent spirits and forces such as witches, wizards, demons and sorcerers.”<sup>129</sup> As Marshall explains, indigenous religion is treated as a threat to Pentecostalism because its practices represent the essentialized historical and cultural African past. She says,

Religious “Others,” in particular Muslims, are typically demonized in Pentecostal discourse; however, this demonization of the past is less about the contemporary threat that traditional religion poses in terms of religious competition (unlike Islam) and more about its connection with a cultural past that failed to provide the moral grounding for a good society in the present.<sup>130</sup>

Pentecostalism exploits the anxieties of rural-urban migration by encouraging people to break with social relations that tie them to their cultural pasts and take on new social and supernatural identity, singularized under the banner of Christianity.<sup>131</sup> What *Agbara Nla* does, however, surpasses the binary of idealization and demonization of rural-urban spaces. The drama appropriates equal amount of corruption – spiritual, economic and ethical- to both spaces. When Kola and Bose forsook their evangelical calling, they moved to Abuja, where they enmesh themselves in the culture of bribery and corruption that pervades government bureaucracies, and in fact, they use Bible passages to justify their receipt of bribes. The urban space had demonic forces in human forms that seduce Christians who had wavered in their faith like Kola and Bose. Urbanity represents temptations, government, corruption, darkness, and overall failure of modernity. The rural space was equally dark too. It was haunted by spectral forces and oppressive demonic forces that enslaved the people through their human agents such as Isawuru.

What is more remarkable about the construction of rural and urban spaces is the use of the former as a typology of a pre-colonial and essentialized pre-modern Africa that needs to be redeemed from paganism and heathenistic practices through the “civilizing mission” of Christianity. God, as he is represented in Nigerian visual culture, is white and male.<sup>132</sup> His gaze on abject Africa with its perennial case of poverty, death, and disease ramps up the consciousness that the dark skin is synonymous with darkness and pre-Enlightenment progress. Nigerian Pentecostalism, confounded by the “weight of blackness” responds to the economic and technological backwardness of the continent by offering more of Christ as the viable route to modernity and progress.<sup>133</sup> Pastors have argued that Africa’s liberation consists of wrenching themselves from the past and embracing the modernity of Christian values and practices to progress.<sup>134</sup> Christian Protestantism, according to Birgit Meyer, has been about journeying

towards modernity in the social, economic, and political sense of the term. Pentecostalism, therefore, employs rhetorical strategies (such as “backsliding”) that help to temporalize the African traditions and characterize their “pre-conversion” state as a backward past (which makes Christianity a progressive normative present).<sup>135</sup> As both Simone Browne and John Fiske have argued in their study of racial surveillance, surveillance imposes norms and upholds the construct of race.<sup>136</sup> Offering Christ (the light) as a solution to Africa’s darkness, therefore, smooths over the creases of racial history and brutal forces of globalization that dealt Africa a heavy hand in the first place and consigned her to backwardness.

The trope of darkness-meets-light was evident in the spaces the camera chose to highlight. For instance, while most of the scenes in *Agbara Nla* that took place in Lagos and Abuja were indoor shots, the scenes in Muwonleru give a visual feast of a “backward” African village. We see characters move through the village and the camera focuses on usual markers of African pre-industrial development: mud houses, villagers engaged in subsistence farming, fishing, vocational labor, and other forms of agrarian practices. There are no indications that certain modern social and physical infrastructures such as schools, hospitals, or even telecommunication has accessed the place yet there were moments of directorial slips when Isawuru uses a gun and mirror! The level of ignorance of Isawuru is pre-logical given the proximity of Muwonleru village to the metropolitan city of Lagos (less than a day journey, according to the film). The narrative construct of a pre-Christian darkness-into-enlightenment was so vital to the drama’s political project that the people of Muwonleru needed to be in the metaphoric darkness (and enslavement) of indigenous religions. Isawuru was so ignorant of the outside world that he had to consult his magic mirror to know who Jesus Christ was! Apparently, distance here is neither geographical nor spatial; it is a temporal one that was bridged by

supernatural power. When Isawuru's inquiry about who Jesus was gets a response from the omniscient Christian God (who structured the entire circuit of events and who must have been watching and waiting for this moment), what Isawuru sees is a Jesus represented by an English actor (Robert Powell) whose phenotypical features is decidedly western. The cinematic frame – the film, *Jesus of Nazareth*- where his history was captured and beamed to Isawuru via his magic mirror also fits snugly into other symbolisms of western modernity.

*Agbara Nla* is not the only Christian narrative that promises modernity to Africans, Pastor Daniel Olukoya of Mountain of Fire and Miracle Ministry, in one of his sermons I listened to some years ago, suggested that Africa is in a state of backwardness because the white missionaries that brought Christianity to Africa focused on making converts of the people. He argued that the failure of the missionaries to banish the demons in Africa forever at the time they brought Christianity still haunts the entire continent and his church is positioned to redress this shortcoming through its deliverance mission. *Agbara Nla* restates this argument by re-staging the colonial missionary enterprise using Olaboye and Olatomi as key actors of the evangelical project. Unlike their white predecessors whose civilizing mission ended as superficial, this new band of missionaries was armed with a more charismatic and potent version of the truth. In place of a mere conversion of the African native, Olaboye and Olatomi were also armed with a Christianity that vanquishes Africa's demons, sets her free, and introduces a superior form of modernity. Their new offering will make up for the failure of a secular modernity and its hallmark – a rational intellectual and political culture- that has no use for God. Their missionary enterprise is an “enlightened,” embodied and supernatural gospel that employs charismatic truth to challenge the dead ideology and theology of orthodox Christianity.

After God's omniscience has invaded Isawuru's closet (which, in some sense, is a Christian voyeuristic fantasy of what the pagan "other" does in private) and shed light on his ignorance, Isawuru goes blind. Thus, his shut-eye signifies the end of an era and its systems of beliefs (just as Kola's opened eyes at the village signals the beginning of his assignment). Isawuru's inability to see and his being led by a child (and the Bible says, "a child shall lead them"<sup>137</sup>) to the house of the evangelists becomes a form of death. The trek between his house and the evangelists' and the humiliation of that walk re-enacts the shame of Jesus to cavalry (which Jesus showed him in his magic mirror) and the subsequent crucifixion that culminated in Jesus' eventual resurrection on the third day. For Isawuru, this walk to his own Calvary where he would be resurrected into a new life was a staging of that performative action that demonstrates his readiness to be crucified. When his eyes are reopened through prayers offered by Olaboye and Olatomi, he becomes "born again." In the Bible, when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden, their "eyes opened" and they realized they were naked. "Naked" for Isawuru, is a realization of his having been in darkness and his alternate experience of open eyes-blindness-and re-opened eyes represents a walk from one form of knowledge to another.

As "born-again" Isawuru begins another life and identity that he seals by offering himself a new name: Paul Esupofo. In Yoruba culture, names that accompany a birth can be political and are illocutionary acts in themselves. Isawuru combines both Yoruba and Biblical names but while the former name, Paul, legitimates his new birth and signals his attempt to surrogate himself with a similar character in the Bible who also went blind when he encountered Jesus, the latter name Esupofo makes him a living embodiment of the repudiation of indigenous faith and beliefs. While Pentecostalism has been a modernizing influence that urges African converts to "make a complete break with the past"<sup>138</sup> we see Isawuru retain a portion by using the name



“Esu” a Yoruba god whose essence has been willfully bastardized by Christian missionary initiatives.<sup>139</sup> “Esupofo” (Esu –mistranslated as the devil/Satan-has been vanquished) suggests that he walks around antagonizing his past and proclaiming to his former associates that he embodies a new agonistic subjectivity. His new body thus becomes a site where the fault lines of religious and cultural differences will be subsequently contested. By offering himself as a human signboard for a shift in religious and supernatural allegiances, he promotes himself as a new creature whose acts of identity establishment is a negation of the social and supernatural ties that bound him to his past life.

He thus enters a new life with a new body like those of Olaboye and Olatomi whose virtual bodies he could summon supernaturally in his magic mirror. His ability to shoot them and even have the shattered glass spatter with blood was a spectacularized representation of the extent of the capability of the panoptical power of indigenous religion to transcend space and time, and enact evil upon people on whom it casts its “evil eye.” The blood splatter adds to the vividness of the supernatural realism and thus produces an uncanny moment when the viewer sees his/her own vulnerability to occult forces. When it turns out that Olaboye and Olatomi did not die, and were, in fact, unaware of such grand designs against them, we see a disaggregation of the Pentecostal corporeal body from the panopticism of occult power. The mirror was effective to the point that it could bring the images of the couple to Isawuru but his failure to hurt them showed that the pre-existing modes of supernatural surveillance have been emptied of their power. Though they still “function” to the point that they can find people and bring them before the evil eye who shoots them and even have blood issued from the magic mirror, their powers are internally empty and bereft of any material efficacy. Both Olaboye and Olatomi now occupy a Pentecostal body (and metaphorically, the church is considered the body of Christ), which is

hidden in a zone that cannot be accessed by occult eyes. The people that came up in the magic mirror were in fact trick images because the photographs of their bodies that were made visible before Isawuru's eyes were those of their previous pre-Christian existence. Those images had no bearing on their material existence because being in Christ has taken the Olaboye and Olatomi away from where the realm they could be accessed by the shadowy power of indigenous religions along with its arcane cults, rituals and mystical power. They are instead subsisting within a new and transparent reality that defeats the dark opacity of the cultic African religions.

Panoptical power in *Agbara Nla* also co-opts the eye of the camera in the "othering" of the indigenous beliefs. In visual history, the concept of the "evil eye" is based on the idea that seeing has aggressive potentials. The discerning ability of the eye leads to (re)producing what is seen and banishing of what is not seen, condemning it to non-existence. Thus, "... the evil eye mimics and mirrors the eye as its double. It reflects the eye and adopts as its own one of its attributes, the killing quality. Separation, splitting, demarcation is the business of the eye; this how the eye acts on the eye."<sup>140</sup> The technological eye acting on the biological and social eye is instructive in this case because of the way it brings to light the "dark" practices of occult power to convict them in the court of spectatorial sentiments. *Agbara Nla*, by bringing up what Christians claim to be practices of indigenous religions, first gave the "other" a semblance of omniscience. The claim of *Agbara Nla* that it can penetrate the "dark" crevices where indigenous religions carry out their arcane rituals makes the Christian God (and by implication, the Christians who represent light) is omniscient. The camera lens that gazed onto Isawuru's private activities and represented it as evil tacitly drafts the viewers' eyes collaborate in the destruction of the "other." The viewer, focusing on the story and its execution as it unfolded, risks missing

the aggression of the technological eye that gazes into activities of the “other’s” religious beliefs even if the said activities were mostly fabrications.

The incursion of techno-religious politics is instructive to the battle of the supremacy of faith and to the triumph of “the ultimate power.” As Peter Weibel says, “there are, namely, instruments that penetrate deeper and further into reality than the human eye... Technical seeing teaches us that there is a reality that is invisible (to the natural eye) and which can be made visible in (technical images) ...”<sup>141</sup> Under the eye of the camera, *Agbara Nla* brings up what it wants to be seen, represses more benevolent aspect of indigenous beliefs, simplifies complex religious philosophy, and markets this mix to believers or would-be converts. This eye – a mesh of biological, technological, and cultural- becomes an ontological one that “en-light-ens” the viewer’s eyes about the Christian God and his ultimate power. By pitching the practices of Babalawo as darkness, and bringing the ontological eye of Christ to tell the “other’s” story to a mass audience, Mount Zion Faith Ministries sealed an important victory.

What is ultimately at stake in supernatural surveillance is power – who gets to use it and against whom. Underlying the supremacy battle for “the ultimate power” between Christians and non-Christians is the fear of all kinds of denudation that can occur when their bodies are visible to the monitoring eye. By exploring the various ways –metaphorical and supernatural- that the eye features in the epic battle for dominance between Pentecostal Christianity and the African indigenous religious “other,” I have shown how Pentecostals understand supernatural visibility and surveillance; the anxieties that underline supernatural visibility; and how Pentecostals repudiate them through prayer rituals and other performative acts. While *Agbara Nla* has shown that these mirrors can be emptied of a substance through the power of the Christian God that protects the believer, the anxieties of remote surveillance remain undissipated and continue to

shape the creativity of Pentecostalism and widen the spheres of its imagination. That these ideas are still being circulated by the churches in the diaspora, especially “first-world” countries like the USA and Europe, the so-called bastions of “rationality” and superior logical or thinking that precludes any religious beliefs or received wisdom shows the power of religious imagination to remake places on its own terms.

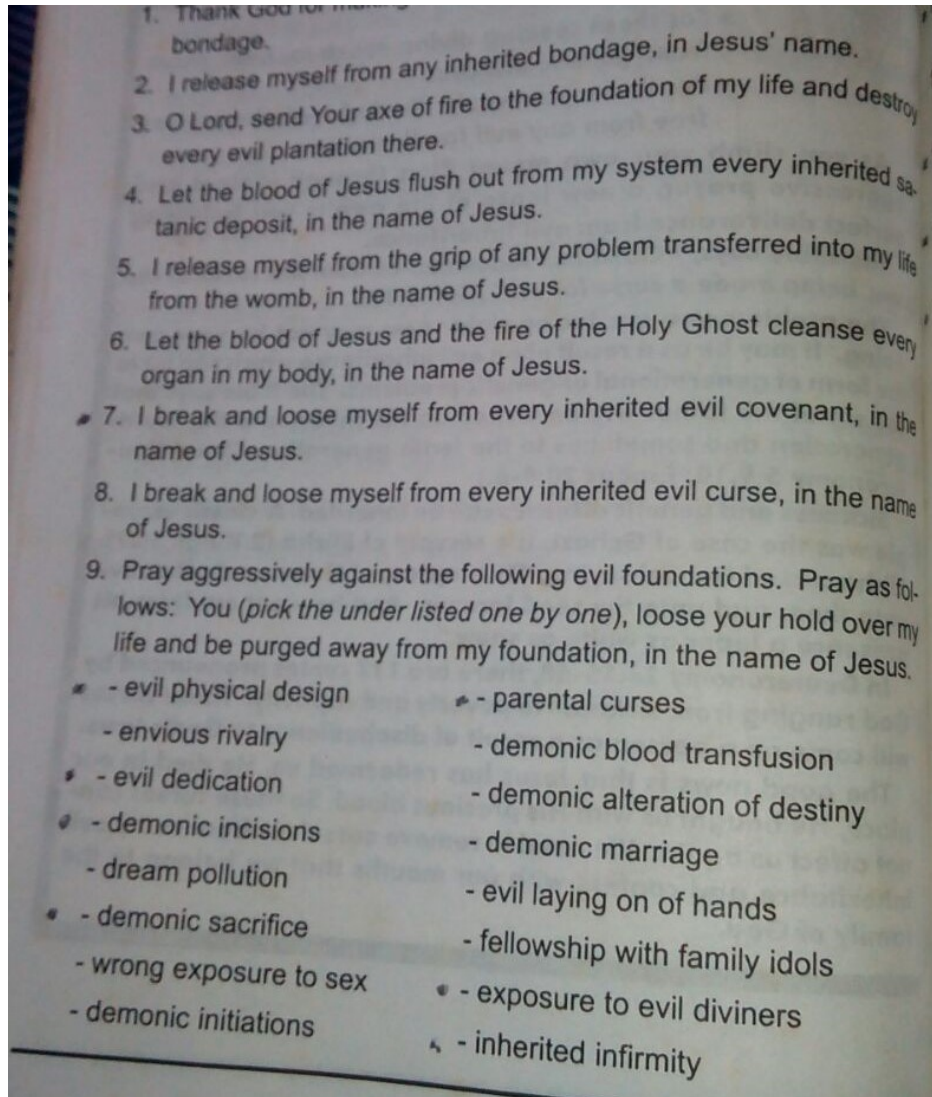


Figure 15 - A page from one of MFM prayer books

## The “Miracle Wedding” and Phantasms of Surveillance

*Then Abishai the son of Zeruiah said to the king, “Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Please, let me go over and take off his head!” But the king said... “So let him curse, because the Lord has said to him, ‘Curse David.’ Who then shall say, ‘Why have you done so?’ ” Let him alone, and let him curse; for so the Lord has ordered him. It may be that the Lord will look on my affliction, and that the Lord will repay me with good for his cursing this day.” 2 Samuel 16:5-11.*

The above Bible passage, the story of King David at a moment of vulnerability and pain, provides a useful frame to understand the psychology of the subject of panoptical surveillance. Because Pentecostalism is a performance that requires series of public acts and private rituals to establish the Pentecostal identity, believers are also aware that there are human eyes that monitor their activities or the progression of their life circumstances so subject them to ridicule if they fall short of a certain standard. The case of King David typifies how the self-conscious subject manages the gaze using a mix of supernatural and performance competence to achieve either indemnification or compensation for the ridicule they experience. The king had just been usurped by his own son, Absalom, and he was leaving for exile with his retinue of aides in great shame. Along the way, a man called Shimei met them and began to curse the deposed king. Shimei was a distant relative of the late King Saul whose dynasty King David himself had replaced. Shimei not only cursed David, he also threw stones at him calling him “murderer” and an evil man. One of the king’s aides, infuriated by the insults, asked the king’s permission to decapitate the insolent fellow, but David refused by saying God had asked Shimei to curse him and no one could take up a prerogative to avenge an antagonism staged by God himself. David’s next statement showed the spiritual economy of ridicule: “It may be that the Lord will look on my affliction and that the Lord will repay me with good for his cursing this day.”

For David, Shimei's ridicule of him was part of cosmic agenda to humiliate him and his counter-action would determine whether he was humbled enough for saving or not. The scorn and stones heaped on his body, was part of a drama that God, the omniscient spectator needed to "see" to be moved to act on his behalf. David's idea of compelling God for his redemption follows a dramatic track: his present circumstances meant that the same God that had made him king had become passive. To energize God, they needed to rouse His emotions and to do that required a ritualized enactment of the king's shame from an "inferior" subject. God, the silent audience looking down at the series of actions from his remote location in the sky, would then decide that the king had suffered enough and react by saving him. This phantasmic projection of a divine and powerful spectatorship reveals a psychological aspect of staging the self for the gaze. In my ethnographic research, I had several respondents discuss one kind of travails or the other they had experienced at some point in their life and then point out that they told God to not let their enemies laugh at them or as an interviewee, Mrs. Victoria, puts it, "I told God to not let *them* use me to insult His glory." The "them" in her thoughts are people she imagines sit one observatory or the other from where they monitor her life so they could mock her failures and setbacks. Slavoj Zizek says, "Fantasy proper is not the scene itself that attracts our fascination, but the non-existent imagined gaze observing it."<sup>142</sup> Mrs. Victoria's appeal to God against the imagined gaze that observes her life also helps her present her case before God in form of a blackmail. By being a child of God, she says, the mockery of her was by extension against God as well. It was up to God to react to her traducers by ceasing the reason for their mockery.

Like King David, her route to salvation lay in her imagination of the aggression and benevolence of the eyes watching the drama of her life. First, there were the eyes of the subject looking at itself in conditions of shame and pain. For David, this self-consciousness was caused

by the loss of his throne and his subsequent exile. Two, the eye of the “other” that not only sees the fall of the believer but also cements their humiliation with an act that emphasizes their denudation. For instance, David had stones thrown at his body that had only been recently invested with the power and authority of royalty (and Mrs. Victoria feared she would be insulted and her religion cast into disrepute). Three, the benevolent eye of God observing the scene and awaiting a moment when the antagonist’s ridicule would be dense enough for Him to be compelled to intervene on behalf of the hero (David). In that moment, David saw himself as the protagonist of a drama where the antagonist’s acts were going to build up to a climax of ultimate triumph for him; Mrs. Victoria’s mockers became her prayer points.

To illustrate the fantasies of soliciting ridicule to enable the believer triumph over undesirable circumstances, I explore the story of the “miracle wedding” that took place in Winners Chapel in Enugu, Southeastern Nigeria in 2014, and my 2017 follow-up on the story with my surrogate researcher who carried out a recorded interview for me. The pastor had asked single women who wanted to be married to come to church in wedding gowns if they want to get married that same year. The following Sunday, about half a dozen women complied and the pastor asked them to sit in the front row in church. Some bridal shops came to the church to lend wedding gowns to women who wanted to join the prayers too. The pastor prayed for them and asked them to sow seeds towards their miracle.<sup>143</sup> The story made it to social media and the women whose faces were plastered on gossip blogs became a subject of ridicule by those who accuse them of “desperation” and especially men who made lewd comments about them. Some others were sympathetic saying it was faith at work and they hoped their faith would work for them. One of the commenters, Ugo Chime said, “What is this pretty refined-looking girl [(photo 5) (see first image below)] doing messing around with this fuckery?????!!!! Does she need to

get to this level to get a husband, if that's what she desires? Am quite disappointed.” Another commenter, Mich, added, “If I wanted a wife and I saw one that fits what I'm looking for wearing a wedding gown in a church all in a bid to get God to give her a husband, I honestly won't take her serious anymore...this is a sheer act of desperation and gullibility.”







Figure 16

The women's unmarried state in a cultural context like Nigeria where marriage is considered an important rite of passage is a source of shame (and in fact a threat to their other social aspirations). Coming to church in wedding gowns was out themselves as aging unmarried women desperate to be coupled and inviting public ridicule especially if the act of faith did not produce any visible results. By bringing out their private shame and vulnerable points to the public, they are in fact staging themselves and their situation for public consumption so they could absorb the ridicule which would prompt God -the ever silent but not neutral observer- to be moved to respond on their behalf. Zizek argues that the ongoing trend of people putting out their private lives on social media displays

Urgent needs for the fantasmatic Other's gaze serving as the guarantee of the subject's being: I exist in so far I am looked at all the time... The tragi-comic reversal of the Bentham Orwellian notion of the Panopticon society in which we

are (potentially) “observed always” and have no place to hide from the omnipresent gaze of power: today, the anxiety seems to arise from the prospect of NOT being exposed to the Other’s gaze all the time so that the subject needs the camera’s gaze as a kind of ontological guarantee of his/her being.<sup>144</sup>

To expand further on Zizek, I would argue that religious inclinations and belief in the existence of a silent supernatural observer also leads people to stage their situations. They know such performances open them up to ridicule in the process but mockery and its aggressive components can also be incorporated into the rituals they stage towards redemption. That makes their antagonists unwitting actors in a drama whose ultimate purpose is to enact their desired victory. The real or imagined other that attacks them supplies the theatrical action that builds up to the climatic point where their victory is guaranteed – supernaturally and physically. As Zizek also says,

When Lacan defines the Freudian drive as reflexive (the visual drive is not the drive to see, but, in contrast, the drive to make oneself seen, etc.) does he not thereby point towards the most elementary theatricality of the human condition? Our fundamental striving is not to observe, but to part of a staged scene, to expose oneself to a gaze – not a determinate gaze of a person in reality, but of the non-existing pure Gaze of the big Other.<sup>145</sup>

The antagonist characters, whether Shimei who threw stones at King David or the social media jokers who made denigrating comments about the women are the “others” to whom they expose themselves when they perform their faith in public. These antagonists unknowingly play roles that heighten the drama by accentuating the believer’s suffering, abjection, and wretchedness. They absorb the scorn their antagonists pour on them with a religious fortitude and forbearance knowing that they are being remotely watched by God who will take their shame away.

When my brother (my surrogate interviewer), travelled to Enugu to interview the pastor of the church and discuss the theological import of that religious event, he found that the pastor

had also asked job seekers in the congregation to come to church that Sunday with their letter of employment written out according to how they desired it. The pastor said they would raise it up in the air, he would pray for them, and they would have their desires. When he met my brother, the pastor was rather belligerent and evasive on the subject. In the tape my brother recorded for me, he claimed three of the women had been married but he would not release their contacts nor allow an interview with them for any reason. He went into a long explanation of the justification for that act by citing the Bible and explaining that faith is “evidence of things not seen” and the women were demonstrating their faith that they would be eventually be married by dressing up for a wedding that would happen in the nearest future.

When my brother pressed him further on the necessity of asking the women to make their issues public when they could have held private prayer sessions for them, the pastor retorted that a priest of a Roman Catholic church would not go to church without his cassock. The women, he said, were wearing the uniform of the office of a wife they were hoping to inhabit in the future. To a non-believer (and even believers) who called the women names on social media, these women are crazy by cooperating with the pastor who exploited their desperation to be married. In religion, however, crazy is a faith technique and not necessarily derogatory. Achille Mbembe says that in the production of (religious) truth, “faith and a certain stupefaction must overlap” because,

All religious truth, especially when the latter aspires to universality, is always exposed to being seen as in some way an experience of madness. In this context, “madness” should not be taken in its classical sense, as a form of irrationality and marginality, but rather as the point where discourse on the divine that seeks to explain itself and make itself understood by others is suddenly exhausted, exhausts its meaning, and provokes a kind of astonishment and incredulity, to the point that people laugh.

Laughter in the case of David manifests as mockery and scorn poured on him by a human agent that was unaware of God's grand designs. For Mrs. Victoria, laughter was an insult to her and her God and in the case of the women in the miracle wedding, laughter and mockery by their social media audience does not quite matter. Those who mock them are in fact helping God's will to triumph because they supply the dramatic contents of the act that will lead to their ultimate triumph. The pastor concluded that these techniques work for them all the time but a non-Christian would not understand because their acts are derivative of Biblical practices. He said,

If there were no testimonies, you wouldn't be seeing people here on Sundays. People don't go where they don't get miracles. The same way some people uploaded those pictures (of the faith wedding) on Facebook, they would have gone back to complain that despite all the things the women did, nothing happened.<sup>146</sup>

### **Testimonies and Performing for the Gaze**

The dynamics of Pentecostal Panopticism does not begin and end with the metaphysical gaze. There is also the human network of surveillance that includes one's immediate church members, fellow Christians, or members of the public who sometimes constitute themselves as the social police of Pentecostal morality. Altogether, these groups form a band of surveillance that robs the city spaces -where Pentecostal churches are usually sited- the anonymity and urban isolation that results in permissive behavior.<sup>147</sup> Within the church, however, the technology of surveillance and the interaction of the human and supernatural worlds consists of the eye of the pastor, characteristically a male figure, who is considered the embodiment of the divine power. He is a spiritual authority and is believed to function as the physicality of the all-seeing God's

eyes on the collective worshippers. His eyes are not only physical but spiritual too because when he is ministering, he is believed to be “seeing” through the eyes of the spirit. Nimi Wariboko argues that the worth of pastoral charisma or “the anointing” is gauged by the pastor’s ability of God’s big wo/man to see beyond the physical realm, mediate spiritual blessings between the worlds, and legitimate their authority. He says,

In Nigerian Pentecostalism, knowledge is often understood as a kind of vision; seeing and knowing are connected. Simply consider what Pentecostal preachers often say at the altar when they are passing off divine knowledge to their audience: “I see the Lord....” It is not that “to know” is not to hear but that knowledge is couched in the vocabulary of seeing, as in lifting the veil of phenomenal blindness. Indeed, the non-Pentecostal life is often described as blindness.<sup>148</sup>

The density of this ocularity is enhanced through technology: the pastor’s image, peering down at the congregation from the various projectors in the church space is evocative of “Big Brother” watching his subjects in the Orwellian dystopia. The pulpit from where his eyes go all out all over the church is separated from the generality of the congregation and is highly respected as a consecrated space. The spatial architecture of the church allows the pastor to be individualized as a lone figure on the altar, a consecrated space onto which divine power descends, and exudes to the congregation. In chapter two, it was no accident that people rush to siphon the power of God believed to have descended on the altar while the pastor was ministering, and they would have rushed the pastor himself to draw supernatural power off him if he was not protected by armed guards who lurk nearby the pulpit. From this sanctified ritual space, the pastor looks down on the rest of the congregation and every now and then, rests his eyes in a person’s direction. Occasionally, there are testimonies about the miracle of the pastor’s eyes as the case of Mrs. Ogunsakin who said, “While pastor was ministering, he suddenly looked in my direction and prophesied that whoever was looking for the fruit of the womb will not see

her period after the last one. I received it and today here is my miracle baby!” The gaze of the pastor is the human gaze of God and it is not regarded lightly because it could produce divine power for their benefit.



**Winners Chapel NL** @Winn... · 11h ✓

TESTIMONY:

By faith, medical protols are broken with the delivery of 2 bouncing boys when gynaecological scans confirmed them to be girls.



Figure 17 – Sometimes, testimonies can be unaware of its own ironies!

“Testimony time” is another point where monitoring and behavior regulation occurs in churches. Testimony time is when individuals come out from among the congregation to testify to God’s acting on their behalf. This aspect of Pentecostal ritual is remarkable because it is a controlled account, the self-reporting of a lived experience of the narrator who also happens to be the key human agent and lead witness in the entire encounter. People come forward during

church service, stand on the altar to narrate how they had an issue, and how God worked on their behalf. Such narratives are powerful and empowering “because it enables its possessor to integrate its memories, experiences, and aspirations in a schema of long-term action.”<sup>149</sup> They talk about themselves, their relatives, their co-workers, and virtually anybody within their circle. Since the accounts are rendered from their point of view, they are usually the victorious heroes of their own narratives. Power is granted to individual believers to momentarily occupy the space the pastor does on the altar stage and spin their stories, memories, experience, and personal reflections into a condensed narration of “see what the Lord has done for me.”

People who are empowered by the opportunity to extract a portion of their lived experience and frame it within a narrative that will ultimately glorify God soon find themselves working through a couple of skills. The first skill required of them is creative storytelling - stringing a chain of events into a linear or semi-linear narrative that can be told within the allotted time (often 30 seconds to a couple of minutes, depending on the size of the crowd waiting to testify). The second skill they exhibit is their knowledge of disparate rituals and how the alchemy of their procedures can produce miraculous results. For instance, during “testimony time” certain folks have testified thus: “When the man of God said those who want a job should do something to impress God, I came to church every day and swept the floor. As I did this, I told God that I was obeying His word so He could give me the job He has reserved for me. Brothers and sisters, just two days ago, my employment letter came. I am now gainfully employed to the glory of God!” By performing her obedience, the testifier showed her ability to key into a major transformative moment and the testimony narrative was her restaging of that history. Narrating one’s story before a congregation full of friends and strangers also introduces a vulnerability that is consequent of relating intimate accounts of failed marriages, poverty,

sickness, impotence, demonic possession, barrenness, and potentially stigmatizing behavior on the altar (see appendix C for samples). One Olawale Bukola testified that God delivered her from “immoral thoughts,” a rather bold thing to admit among a congregation that premises holiness and moral purity. The testimonies emphasize their personal victories and sometimes people relate them knowing that their listeners are judging them. The case of Mrs. Funke Sadiq and her testimony during the church anniversary shows this dramatic content and presentation. I reproduce her unedited account below, accompanying it with a “cleaner” and more coherent translation.

I am Funke Sadiq and my daughter is Kofoworola Sadiq. When we born her 20 years ago, she was deaf and dumb. We started carrying her up and down. 13 years ago, we went to one Babalawo. The Babalawo said, “Ha! I cannot do this type of job. I can only assist you by taking you to one omo kekere kan to ni church kan ni Iwaya (one young child who leads a church in Iwaya).” Then I started crying with her Dad. After saying that, her dad said what, He will never go. Then the Babalawo called me at the back and said, “My child, take this child to the omo kekere. His name is Olukoya (church applauds). When we carried her, Baba said I should come and meet him at Onike Bus Stop immediately on Sunday morning around 6.30. I woke up early, I dressed her up and followed. Immediately, the man said, “Oya, let us go.” We trekked from Onike to MFM Iwaya. The Baba said, “Just wait for me.” My husband gave me one envelope. He said, “Madam, wait for me I want you to do something for me. Immediately the man comes out, I will show you. He is Olukoya. Just mention, “Olukoya,” “Olukoya,...” So immediately the G.O. come and then I didn’t know the G.O., so he said, “Look, that child will speak. Just look! I am a herbalist/Babalawo but your child will speak.” I carried my child. During the offering time, Baba didn’t go, Baba sat. Baba said, “you just take the envelope and give it your daughter. The envelope my husband gave me for money for ritual for her because I have been carrying her up and down, deaf and dumb. Immediately that Sunday we dropped the envelope. It was that Friday, to god is the glory, it was the anointing service at Tafawa Balewa square. When we got there, by three o’clock the G.O. mentioned that “Oh, my God!” The G.O. said that there is a woman here with a girl who is unable to talk and hear. When she gets home, she should use the anointing oil. If on Tuesday the lady doesn’t talk, we should find him wherever he is, we should find him out. On Tuesday morning (her voice pitch rises), my daughter speak oooooout! (The church erupts into shouts of hallelujah). Since then, since then, up to this time, my daughter is there. My husband frustrated me. All the family frustrated me because he is a Muslim and by now I said no, I am free in this. I am not going back to any Muslim again. I am going to join MFM. My parents also



frustrated me that I should come back to the Baptist (church) but I refused that this MFM (raises voices to a scream), I am going to go! I won't stop going to MFM! (Now screaming) My daughter speak out in MFM! MFM, you are greeaaaaat!.<sup>150</sup>

Her account narrates how her daughter was congenitally deaf and was mute too. She said they took the child to many places for healing and salvation but nobody could help them. Then they took the child to a Babalawo, a priest of Ifa religion, who told them her case was beyond his abilities but he would recommend “a small boy” who had a church around Iwaya area. Her husband refused to go to church but the Babalawo called her aside and told her that was where her child could be healed. The Babalawo arranged for her to meet him on Sunday morning at Onike bus stop by 6.30am. She complied. Both she and the Babalawo trekked to the church. The Babalawo was the one that pointed to “small boy” who turned out to be the church's General Overseer, Dr. Daniel Olukoya. The Babalawo told her to keep looking at the pastor and her daughter would speak. The Babalawo stayed throughout the service and in fact, instructed her hand the envelope of money her husband gave her (to carry out rituals) to her daughter to drop into the offering basket. On Friday, she was at the Anointing Service when Pastor Olukoya mentioned her daughter's case, asked them to apply the anointing oil on her, and if by Tuesday service the girl was still not talking they should bring her to him wherever he might be. Miraculously, that Tuesday morning, the girl spoke! The mother went on to narrate the frustration she experienced with her husband who wanted her to remain a Muslim and her family who wanted her to return to the Baptist church. She said she spurned all of them and chose to remain in MFM where her daughter spoke.

Her account is interesting for its seeming contradictions: A woman and her Muslim husband consults a Babalawo who not only refers them to a church, stayed throughout the

service and even instructs the woman as to how to perform the Christian faith to receive a miracle. The money her husband gave her for the Babalawo to perform rituals ends up in the offering basket at the urging of the Babalawo himself who presumably returned to being Babalawo after the whole encounter. After the woman's daughter is healed, her Muslim husband tries to bar her from the MFM church and her own Baptist parents (who did not seem to have problems with her being married to a Muslim) frustrated her for joining another religious denomination! The religious mobility in this narration seem incredible but what is of concern here is her accounting of her own self, her own triumphs, and her reiteration of her love and loyalty for the church publicly proclaimed before thousands of other believers. The church responds with a shout of hallelujah and with the call and response between her and the congregation, faith and identity are affirmed. The story she weaves and her delivery of it, are not merely a "representation of the past, or things presumed to have happened or existed, but also sketches possibilities, prophecies, or scenarios for things that might be."<sup>151</sup> After giving an account of her travails and her triumph, she concludes by exuding "I am not doing Muslim again!" Throughout the testimony, her daughter who was healed stood beside her without saying a word so there is no way to independently verify her account.

Testimonies can also be morally ambivalent because people give an account of their triumphs, they seem unaware that their vanquished enemies are real people who suffer and not fictive characters. Performing narratives of victory before a multitude of people in churches can sometimes lead to embellishment, self-aggrandizement, and a failure to display empathy. What is being exhibited before the church is radical grace and the staging on it necessarily eschews any ethical awareness that can undermine the self-presentation of the believer? For instance, Deacon Chidiebere Aanafo testified,

I'm from Ngboba, Port Harcourt. I had in mind to build a house for my parents who had no house of their own. Immediately I made this decision, my uncle and aunty in the village stood against the plan and told me the house would never be built. As a result, my uncle began to pack the blocks to patch his own house just to frustrate me but I stood my grounds. I knew it would not be wise to physically fight them. So, I turned the battle over to God; I would go to the site, anoint the ground, sprinkle the blood and declare the Word. Sometimes, I would go there with my car and park just to play Papa's message. This continued until the building began. When it was time to roof the house, my aunt said that she didn't want the water/rain from the roof to touch her own ground or compound; and the battle continued. I again prayed to God to just intervene, and that was exactly what God did; God struck my aunt with blindness and my uncle who said he had eye problems was given eye drop to use. As he applied the eye drop, he became paralyzed and blind. My parents are now living in the house. I have come to give God all the glory.<sup>152</sup>

It puzzles me how this Deacon constructs a narration of God's favoritism and power around himself by wounding his relatives and yet does not mind returning to church "to give God all the glory" for harming his own uncle and aunt.

The quest to be "seen" as God's child who has been favored drives people to competitiveness and there were many instances when people falsely testified on the altar. While I was visiting a high-ranking church official in Winners' Chapel, he informed me that he had just left a meeting where pastors had met with someone who testified at a church service the previous day. The person had claimed that he was surgically operated on by Jesus in his dream and was healed of a condition that had been taking him to hospitals for years. The pastors had met him to verify that he was not merely showing off as some others had done in the past. He told me that the people who had been previously exposed in such meetings, when questioned on their effrontery to lie in the house of God, claimed they did it because they too wanted people to "see" that God had worked in their lives too. Some of those exposed, he added, claimed they did not lie but testified ahead of receiving their miracles an act of faith. They were trying to show God how

much faith they had in him by preemptively putting themselves out to *foretell* their testimony (since testimonies are supposed to be retrospective accounts).



Figure 18 – This testimony was ridiculed on Twitter for its incredulity.

“False” testimony requires a lot of faith because if at the end of the day, the miracle did not happen, the testifiers knew they would be ridiculed. There are other instances where testifiers claimed that they did it because of the malevolent spirits who linger around to see that they have

publicly labeled the miracle for God. That way, no devil or his agents can steal the miracle anymore. Through acts of public testimony, God becomes obliged to protect his own integrity by protecting the believer from losing what s/he had publicly dedicated to him. The devil and his agents are thus refrained from stealing people's victories. I have been in church services where people have claimed during "testimony time" that they lost their miracle because they did not testify. Having realized their mistake, they decided to still share whatever is left of the testimony with the hope God would forgive them and restore what the devil took from them.

### **Summary**

Human surveillance is not limited to the church but also outside. People who attend churches also form social networks outside of the church setting as well. This makes them conscious that there are church members "out there" who know them and watch them behave, and therefore they must maintain routines of piety. One of the pastors I interviewed in Ibadan in summer 2015 refused to give me a ride as we left the church about the same time. He was apologetic and explained that he could run into his church members who would not understand the "strange woman" in his car. The Pentecostals' thought that they could be seen by those whom they do not see also regulates their public conduct because they do not want to sin by bringing the church to disrepute. There is also the consciousness of being surveilled by non-Christians who they could discourage from seeking Christ if they do not live up to Christ standards. In my life as a Pentecostal Christian, there was nothing more disheartening than for one's conduct to be slammed the gavel stick of "*And you call yourself a Christian?*" Pentecostals are therefore mindful of their manners, knowing that the multiple foot soldiers of the panopticon are watching over their acts and conducts and shaping their "boundaries, bodies, and borders."<sup>153</sup>

The multivalent human surveillance apparatuses shapes conduct by defining their limits, constraining their attempts at the radical difference that might threaten public expectations of Pentecostal performance, and enforces borders of behavior.

Apart from human and superhuman surveillance, there is also the mechanical gaze people respond to as virtual subjects. During church services, there are usually recording cameras installed in various sections of the church auditorium that beam images through the various projectors throughout the ongoing service. The cameras in the church are mostly trained on the altar, bringing the image of the presiding pastor –or whoever happened to be on the altar- to the congregation no matter where they were seated. The various cameras that are spread out in the auditorium are controlled by many operators, some of them in a monitoring room where they direct operators' lenses to pan all over the auditorium, pick a body in the heat of a performative act -either listening intently to the pastor, or praying silently or expressing some form of spiritual ecstasy- and they display it on the projector. When projected for the whole church to see, the image could stimulate other worshippers to play out their feelings knowing the camera could rest on them as well. Also, noteworthy is that some of these dramatic moments are captured and form part of the repertoire of recorded church services. The DVDs are sold almost immediately after the church service ends and sometimes these same services are beamed (either live or recorded) in satellite and terrestrial TV broadcasts.

## Chapter Five:

### When Godmentality “Fails”....

*The authenticity of the ‘70s and ‘80s has been replaced by pervasive shallowness. Many nominal Christians and ‘unbelievers’ have grown a disdain for Pentecostals because of what they perceive as hollow, irritating, sanctimoniousness. Conspicuous character deficits leave latter-day Pentecostals looking like modern day Pharisees. It is annoying to be put down or indicted by the obtrusive hypocrisy of another whose willingness accommodates the normality of duplicity—an otherwise roguish attempt to straddle both ‘kingdoms’ with equanimity.... Today’s Pentecostals, once supposed standard-bearers, are now too lax to even pretend to be different. The fire is gone.<sup>154</sup>*



Godmentality asserts that people can be “made” or formed or conditioned into religious subjects whose range of possible actions does not exhaust a certain field of pre-determined behavior. The level of sin and corruption in Nigeria, committed by believers and non-believers alike, repudiates the totalizing force of Godmentality. People can be made to conform to certain

modes of behavior through a production of their bodies but there is a limit to which supernatural agency can override or supplant fleshly weaknesses. In my research, the question that I tussled with consistently, and which many Nigerians too ask themselves is, “Why are we so religious and yet so our society is still endemically corrupt?” Sometimes the question is framed in other ways: if Pentecostalism preaches a new life in Christ and the newness premises certain routines of behavior, why are churches and Christians themselves so morally corrupt and ethically bankrupt? Why is there so much worldliness in churches and why is the world so churchly (that is, people perform certain virtues Pentecostal preaches without an accompanying demonstration of conviction)? Why is it that the more churches we have, the more sin we also have in our society? Why are religious houses springing up more than ever before? Why are less overtly religious societies in the West much more economically and technologically developed than Nigeria with its fixation on the power of the divine to catalyze national regeneration? Would we have been better off with secularism? What really does religion contribute to our moral, economic, and social development? The summary of all the questions: Is God the answer or the problem?

Throughout my study of the Pentecostal mode of conditioning its subjects, I have also had to engage the same question – why do the people who go through routines of spiritual disciplinary techniques and subjectivation still fall short of ethical standards? Why are churches so easily associated with the corruption that goes on in Nigeria’s non-sacred spheres such as politics and economic enterprises? Where does conviction end and where does the *con* of performing faith start? How do we disentangle human fallibility from sheer pharisaicalness in rituals of performance? Is the lack of measurable impact of religion on the culture a fair indictment of religion? With the proliferation of Pentecostal churches in Nigeria and the massive



invasion of the public sphere with religious activities from different quarters, Nigeria still rates very low on various indices of national development. For instance, Transparency rates Nigeria low on the corruption index despite several efforts of Nigeria's government to fight this problem of ethical challenges that afflicts the country.<sup>155</sup> On human development index, a study by United Nations Development Program rates Nigeria 152 out of 188 countries showing only a marginal development over the years.<sup>156</sup> On a global scale, Nigeria comes up short on every index used to gauge social and moral development. When Nigerians ask why religiosity has not produced a discernible level of cultural and ethical advancement, what they are interrogating is the true impact of subjectification and Godmentality.

I do not intend to indict Pentecostals alone for Nigeria's challenges considering that the same national space is occupied by other religions, both majority (such as Islam and Orthodox Christianity) and minority (such as African traditional religions). If religion is to be blamed for Nigeria's lack of development, or if the human and material resources invested in religious activities have failed to produce a nation of ethically aware citizens whose relationship with God also produces the moral discipline necessary to suspend certain gratification such as financial corruption in order to build their country, Pentecostals alone should not take the fall for what spans across different systems of beliefs. Nigeria's ethical problems span religious ideologies and no single system of faith can be solely held responsible for failing to produce subjects who have been refashioned through the disciplinary techniques of religion. However, since this study has focused largely on Pentecostalism and its mode of subjectivation, it is simply logical to continue to toe the track of examining the impact of the failure of religion to refashion an ethical subject through Pentecostalism.

To engage the question of the failure of Godmentality to produce ethical subjects, I go back to the modes of acquiring the Pentecostal subjectivity to question whether performing the routines of faith rituals does indeed make one religious or merely breeds an army of hypocrites for whom performing faith is an exogenous behavior, estranged from the endogenous character of the Pentecostal performer that still gives in to the sensual desires of the flesh? The word “hypocrite” itself has linguistic roots in theatre and role-playing, putting up a front that is removed from one’s actual person. The Greek word *hypokrisis* means to act or to impersonate a character on the stage but in contemporary usage, it indicates a fraud, a charlatan, an ideological two-timer whose public performance is a mere put on to be shed when expedient. If applied to religion, it indicates that the Pentecostal subjectivity is one that allows a creation of an alter ego which Christians put forward to perform the identity they took on at conversion but which has is easily discarded when confronted with sensual gratifications. In the Goffmanian sense, it means the Holy Spirit or not, what Pentecostals perform is a “front” that is separable from their true areligious or amoral character. In short, the very thing that makes Godmentality possible—conditioning through techniques- is also what makes it a failure.

To illustrate the failure of Godmentality, I offer an in the story of a young woman, Ese Walter, who had sexual relations with the pastor of the Pentecostal church she attended, Biodun Fatoyinbo of Commonwealth of Zion Assembly Church. The woman went public with her story in 2013 when, according to her, she was tormented by her conscience but the church elders she spoke to regarding her sin refused to acknowledge that there was something rotten in the church, the body of Christ. She said she could not reconcile the ascetic purity Christianity demands with what her pastor told her when she questioned how he, as a pastor, rationalizes the immorality of their act. According to her, he responded, “I will teach you a level of grace that you don’t

understand.”<sup>157</sup> So far, the pastor has not refuted the story but gave a sermon where he said he would “give a robust response” in the fullness of time. A couple of other women have made similar allegations against the pastor, claiming that he lacked the moral discipline required of a faith preacher. In the light of previous chapters, the critical question for me is, why the “man of God” who preaches subjection and leads people to Christ himself justify his lack of libidinal restraint justifies the sins of adultery and fornication with the knowledge he derives from the Bible itself? Pastor Fatoyinbo’s sin is instructive to wrap up this chapter because it provides an insight into how pastors who are supposed to be models of religious ascetic virtues normalize and rationalize their sin. As the shepherd of God’s flock, they actualize the divine agenda of “making a disciple of all nations” and turn the disciples into the subjects of God. If they themselves do not live up to the values they represent, then it reveals the entire façade of Godmentality and its modes of disciplinary techniques.

In chapter two, I examined what I described as “the widow morality” to understand the self-effacement of believers who seek the face of God to address their existential issues. The widow morality is an anti-hubristic attitude of Pentecostal belief that derives from cultural understandings of humility and self-subjection. Believers perform their humbling conditions before God in order to demonstrate that they are his subjects, feminized, and they have no intention whatsoever of competing with his glory and power. In rituals of worship and solicitation of divine power, the widow morality takes the form of physical submissions such as enduring certain forms of abjection or performing ecstatic joyfulness to demonstrate both an abasement and a subjection that magnifies God. Believers, in the words of their prayers or in the performance of their daily behavior, live to suppress any rising hubris in themselves so they do not equate themselves with God. Even in victory or answered prayers, Pentecostals still maintain

their anti-hubristic attitude by refusing to ascribe their triumph to any other factor except God. This sort of attitude has percolated into the Nigerian society in such a way that while popular hip hop musicians, copying their foreign counterparts, display wads of dollars, magnificent houses, posh cars, light-skinned female models, bottles of champagne, and other appurtenances of success, mimic the anti-hubris of Pentecostal values by claiming a “Na God” stance or say they are sharing their testimony. If Pentecostals proclaim how much they are beholden to God in their daily lives and in all forms of achievement, then how come in private pastor Fatoyinbo exudes the opposite value, putting his sensual desires above God? Is the Pentecostal anti-hubris only useful to stage one’s debased condition before God in prayers and to stage the victory before the congregation during “testimony time” but in reality, it arrogantly defies the moral and ethical standards that define the identity?

Even more interesting is how Pastor Fatoyinbo uses his knowledge of the Bible to negotiate moral standards without accounting for his place both a Christian and as a leader of a major congregation. In chapter three, I talked about the centrality of the Bible to the Pentecostal movement, that the Bible is essentially an imminent script that functions as a disciplinary technique of Pentecostal Christianity. The Word of God (the Bible) is supposed to tailor and/or inform the behavior of the worshipper thereby upholding the normative ethics of their faith. The Bible is a script that determines the acting routines of the Pentecostal faith and believers are meant to imbibe the Word of God through a regime of spiritual exercises such as extensive Bible study, meditation, prayer, and other acts that involve fleshly renunciations (such as fasting). The Bible forms a code that sets the course a believer must follow at the moment of (re)birth at the time of conversion. The teleological patterning of one’s life with the Word of God is the process by which the Word becomes flesh – that is, it prescriptively syncs with the performative acts of

the human actor (that is, the believer) until they are a full embodiment of the Word of God. Pentecostals creatively project the Word in multiple ways, all of which affirms their private beliefs and sets their public acts in motion. Yet, the same Word of God did not restrain Pastor Fatoyinbo even though he is a well-known faith preacher who frequently preaches on the contents of the Bible and the many promises it holds for the liberation of the believer. His response to his congregation member he seduced was that he would teach her (presumably using the Bible) about a level of attainable grace that frees the believer from the internal content of the Pentecostal identity. This sly means of circumventing Biblical set standards allows Pastor Fatoyinbo to embrace human fallibility in private while performing the identity of Pastor of a Pentecostal congregation in public.

In chapter four, I talked about Pentecostal panopticism and how belief in divine surveillance structures Pentecostal moral behavior, leads to a feverish anxiety about the aggressiveness of malevolent eyes that are remotely watching believers, and engenders certain behavioral attributes. The behavior panopticism prompts in the believer thus immures them into subjective modes of being. The Pentecostal God is omniscient, his eyes see and penetrate not only through space and time but also through the human innards to expunge information with which God structures the future. As I mentioned, panopticism ranges from supernatural surveillance to human and mechanical surveillance as well. Pentecostals watch Pentecostals as much as non-Pentecostals watch Pentecostals yet Pentecostals who happily wear their identity tag still sin the same way as people who believe in nothing at all. In the case of Pastor Fatoyinbo, his sin was committed in London, United Kingdom, where, according to his accuser, he claimed had gone for a business engagement and decided to pay her a visit. Was this a sin of opportunity for the pastor who thought he had escaped the surveilling eye of his congregation back in

Nigeria? If his actions were driven by a desire to take advantage the relative anonymity of being in London would grant him, how about the belief in God's omniscient eye that sees everywhere? Why was he not inhibited by the fear of God watching him have sex with a church member for seven consecutive days?

Back to the question that haunts this dissertation, if Godmentality works, why do Pentecostal Christians and their pastor(s) still sin so blatantly and even justify their sins using the very instruments that are applied on their body to subjectify them? At this point, I think the question of the way Pentecostal conduct undermines the ideals of religiosity is a kind of distraction. As an identity that entails performance, Pentecostalism will not be what it is without the tension of *agon*; the contest of wills between an omnipresent God and his subject whose fleshly desires can override the ideals of his/her faith. That is why sin – the fear and prevention of it - is a currency of exchange between the God that demands absolute conformity and the human subject who wants to retain personal autonomy. God might be paramount in Pentecostals' lives to the point they tailor their lives for him but "God" also recedes in the Pentecostal imagination as well. People sometimes allow themselves to forget that "God is watching" and they go ahead to which tests the limits of His forgiving spirit. One of the people I interacted with told me that whenever he had done something wrong, he reminds God of prayer that if he could forgive King David in the Bible who slept with another man's wife and killed her husband so he could keep her, he knows that he could be forgiven anything too. Like Pastor Fatoyinbo's examples shows, within the same disciplinary techniques that suppress the desire of the flesh are the same materials that allow people to justify their sins if they choose.

The intractability of sin in the society despite the rise in religiosity can also be attributed to the overdrive of Pentecostalism's admission of fresh recruits into God's army by promising

crowd over conviction. The spectacular nature of worship turns the church into a leisure space where people congregate to be entertained and find a moral basis for sensual gratification. As the churches absorb everyone and their ranks multiply, the faults of individual subjects become uncontainable, or cannot be subsumed within manageable confines. The wolves mingle with the sheep and each copy each other's nature. None of those who corrupt the body are expelled from the fold because the church needs a large swathe of the army of subjects to make a disciple of the entire nation and even the world. Those who violate God's standards right under his gaze have no intention of disengaging from his army because there are other benefits they derive from being subjects in a culture that is pervaded by Pentecostalism. In some ways, their refusal to conform to the standard of moral behavior exploits the dependence of God on their bodies to build his mass of army that would overrun the world. The failure to constrict the performance of their behavior within strict hagiographic context shows that humans cannot be "trained" in the real sense of it. Or put another way, when an identity requires a performance to institute it, there is also the accompanying risk of "fakeness" or the dissonance of the reality from the simulacrum people put forward.

The advantage of the increasing number is that Pentecostalism, despite its internal contradictions, is that they are empowered to write the norms by which the society would live and exist. As Fiske says, "the power to produce the normal may be the ultimate social power but its effectiveness depends on its ability to extend the normal over the entire social domain."<sup>158</sup> Pentecostalism is writing the norm but with its increasing numbers its disciplinary techniques fails to keep up with the army of subjects it had drafted to increase its ranks. In addition, the focus on religious institutions as places where they build saints who are supposed to acquire gradually a subjectivity that reflects religious-based ideals and morality must first acknowledge

that despite its shortcomings at social reformation, Pentecostalism fulfills its charge to expand God's kingdom. Whether the subjects are perfect beings who exude divine character or not, Pentecostalism has transcended individuals' redemption and is now rewriting the social ethos. Pentecostals have appropriated all kinds of spaces -the sacred, the secular and the seedy- in their expansionist mission<sup>159</sup>- and are aggressively reshaping social character to conform to their Pentecostal beliefs and ethos. They are vectors trying to "infect" everyone with what they have believed by abnormalizing another social phenomenon that does not further their mission. Their subjective Pentecostal experiences are considered the norm and anything outside their polemical stance are construed as deviant and which should be rightfully repressed. They are aligning their tau(gh)t bodies with spatialies to reshape spaces and the public's relationship to it. According to Simon Shepard, a new perception of space is pleasurable because, "As space is reshaped, the relationship to it changes – there are new points of focus, different hierarchies between spatial axes and domains, a newly positioned center." <sup>160</sup>



## Appendix A

### Na God Win

The lyrics goes thus:

Korede Bello:

Don Jazzy again o

Omo olope

Mega superstar o

O da na o

I don get alert...

God win

And I don pay my rent...

God win

Them been wan fall my hand but God win

Them been wan kill my joy but God win

I say anything them do, na God win o, na God win o, na God win o

Anything them do na God win o, na God win o, na God win o

I don change my name to God win

And omo, I don buy motor, God win

Them say my market no go sell, but God win

And them been say i no go blow, but God win them my broda

Make them try their luck.

My God go Win

My God win o

My Lord win o

Anything them do na God go win, na God win o, na God win o

As you don pass exam na God win

And dem bin say you no go pass but God win

You wake up see today lasan, na God win

Robbers dey rob dem no see you broda, God win

Dem no see you my sister na God win o, na God win o, na God win o

Anything them do na God win o, na God win o, na God win o

As na your wedding day na God win

And e don tey wey you dey find but God win

So we go pop champagne today...

God win

We go dance, dance, dance cause God win

Elelele

Anything you win na God win

And if you win election my broda na God win

Like if you win contract my friend na God win

And if you check the countdown my broad, na God win  
And if your market sell lele, na God win o, na God win o, na God win o  
Anything them do na God win o, na God win o, na God win o  
Why you no go dance? Na God win o, na God win o, na God win o, na God win o  
Anything them do na God win o, na God win o, na God win o.....  
God win!

Comedian epilogue: Welcome back...

Korede Bello  
(It's) Don Jazzy again o  
The grateful one  
Mega superstar o  
So here we go  
I have received a bank alert (of an electronic transaction)  
God wins  
And I have paid my rent  
God wins  
They wanted me disappointed but God wins  
They wanted to kill my joy but God win  
I say anything they did still God wins o, God wins o, God wins o

I have changed my name to "God win"  
And you, I have bought a car, God wins  
They said my business would not prosper but God wins  
And they said I would not "blow" but my brother, God wins  
Let them try their luck (against me)  
My God wins  
My God wins o  
My Lord wins o  
Anything they did (against me) God wins, God wins o, God wins o  
As you have passed your exams God wins  
And they said you would not pass but God wins  
The mere fact that you are alive to witness today, God wins

Robbers were robbing but they missed you (or your abode) my brother God wins  
They did not see you my sister God wins o, God wins o, God wins o  
Whatever they did God wins o, God wins o, God wins o  
As it is your wedding day God wins  
It's been a while you have been searching for a partner but God wins  
So we will pop champagne today God wins  
God win

We will dance, dance, dance because God wins  
Anything you win God wins  
And if you win election, my brother, God wins  
Like if you win a contract my friend God wins  
And if you check the countdown my brother, God wins  
And if your business booms, God wins, God wins, God wins o  
Anything they did (against you) God wins o, God wins o, God wins o  
Why won't you dance? God wins o, Gods win o, God wins o, God wins o  
Anything they did (against you) God wins o, God wins o, God wins o.....  
God win!

### **Osinachi**

1 (HUMBLE SMITH):

Plenty people don dey ask  
Na which baba do the jazz  
Say the baba do well for me oh  
Now my life don better  
Not because I suffer pass  
Not because I pray and fast  
No be osho no be jazz,

Chorus: okwa chinenye Nelu, osinachi (kam nu kwa) Osinachukwu (nwanne madu) Osinachi  
mo, okwa chineye Nelu, osinachi (mama) Osinachukwu (tabi'fe) Osinachi mo, okwa chineye

2 (HUMBLE SMITH):

I say my property, sinachi  
Say I don hammer, sina chukwu  
My winning power, sinachimo  
Even my melody, sinachi  
Now I dey ball, I dey go dubai  
Everything we see, we buy  
Na Godwin no be lie  
Tell mr poverty goodbye  
Shebi them be say we no go make am  
But oluwa's prove them wrong  
Extra large my bank account oh  
Tell me why I no go shout  
Not because I suffer pass  
Not because I pray and fast  
No be osho no be jazz  
Chorus:

3. I go name my first daughter, sinachi  
My loving mother, sinachukwu

Promotion letter sinachim  
Iyawo mi sinachi  
Now we shutting down Malaysia  
Every show the boy dey conquer  
Thank you Lord you show me love  
Now I know i'm not alone  
I go sing praises from house to church  
I go throw party for every town  
See my motor, see my mansion

Tell me why I no go shout  
Not because I suffer pass (oh-oo)  
Not because I pray and fast (oh-oo)  
Chorus:

4 (PHYNO):  
*Ibe, ekene kenelum olisa bi ne nu igwe*  
*Daddy ne mezi nu m obi oma*  
*Nwanne inee aya, n'ime ndum o)*  
*Iga fu na chukwu emego nu aka boys achaa*  
*God I dey beg you don't leave me oh*  
*Okwa ikwelu nkwa si na ima rapum oo*  
*Baba obi ni'gwe o-oo-o (Father in heaven)*  
*Wee simu golibe oooo (Told me to enjoy)*  
*Hey, nwanne okwa ima na oke chineke di okpotopo*  
*Amamihe gi kam choro*  
*Maka m di ogogoro*  
*Some dey think say na jazz how the boy came up fast*  
*Mana ha maro na ngozi gi na di ogonogo*  
*Okwa, everyday nne kpe ekpere*  
*Chineke iwee nyemu the reason m ji enye ekele*  
*Now m nanwuli with my family and friends*  
*Ayin n'eme the money down ka*  
*Nwanne oburo jazz*

5. Humblesmith & Phyno  
Plenty people don dey ask (hazi ginI)  
Na which baba do the jazz (owenlo)  
Say the baba do well for me (hey)  
Now my life don better (otuwa)  
Not because I suffer pass (hmm)  
Not because I pray and fast (hey)  
No be osho no be jazz (at all)  
Chorus:

1.Plenty of people have been asking  
Which Baba (using occult power) made the (success) charm for you?  
That he did a good job  
Now my life is better  
Not because I suffered more than others,  
Not because I fasted and prayed  
This is not by wizards or (African) magical power

2. I say my property, comes from God  
I say I have made it, but it comes from God  
My winning power, from God  
Even my melody, from God  
Now I live well, I go to Dubai  
Everything we see (there), we buy  
It is God that won, that is not a lie.  
Tell Mr. Poverty goodbye  
Didn't they say we will not make it?  
But the Lord has proven them wrong  
Extra large, that's my bank account  
Tell me why won't I shout?  
Not because I suffered more than others,  
Not because I prayed and fasted  
This is not by wizards or (African) magical power

3. I will name my first daughter, sinachi (It comes from God)  
My loving mother, she comes from God  
Promotion letter, it comes from God  
My wife, it comes from God  
Now we are shutting down Malaysia  
Every show this boy conquers  
Thank you Lord for showing me love  
Now I know I'm not alone  
I will sing praises from house to church  
I will throw a party in every town  
See my car, see my mansion

***Phyno:***

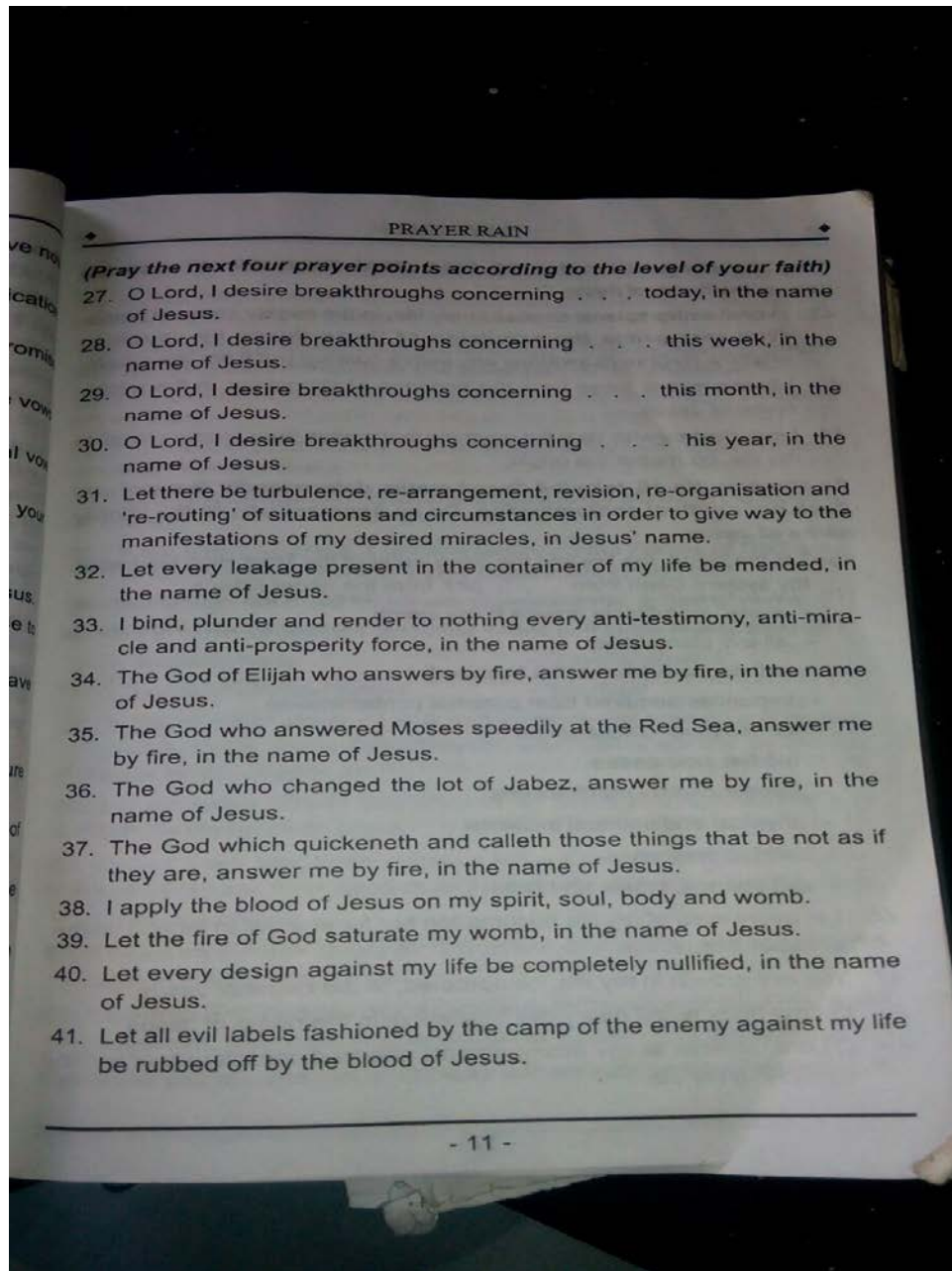
*Greetings to God in heaven  
Daddy has made me happy  
Brother if you look into my life  
You will see God has blessed the boys  
God, I beg you, don't leave me  
Remember you promised you won't leave me*

*Father in heaven told me to enjoy  
Brother you know God's grace is big  
I want your wisdom  
Because I'm empty  
Some the boy came up fast due to some occult power  
But they don't know your blessing is long  
I pray every day  
God you gave me to give thanks  
Now I'm rejoicing with family and friends  
We are doing the money down like  
Brother it's not occult power*

***Davido:***

*My humble father sinachi  
My loving daughter sinachi mo  
My baby mama sinachi  
Dele Momodu sinachi mo  
No be by force to go Dubai  
Abi na wetin cause the fight  
And I just dey my own dey laugh eh  
Because God dey my side  
They want to take away my favour  
They want to spoil my career  
Them no know say I get flavour  
You fit ask Nabania  
I forgive and forget  
Baba God knows the best  
My papa just buy jet  
And about to take off everywhere oh*

## Appendix B – Pages from Prayer Books



be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the LORD am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.

**Isa. 54:17:** No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD.

**Rev. 13:10:** He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

**Isa. 50:7-9:** For the Lord GOD will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord GOD will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up.

**Isa. 54:15:** Behold, they shall surely gather together, but not by me: whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake.

**Isa. 59:19:** So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him.

**Isa. 8:9-10:** Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear, all ye of far countries: gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us.

**Jer. 1:8, 19:** Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD. . . . And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee.

**Deut. 33:25-27:** Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be. There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The



## PRAYER RAIN

- fellowship with local idols
  - demonic initiations
  - unscriptural manner of conception
  - fellowship with demonic consultants
  - wrong exposure to sex
  - destructive effect of polygamy
16. You evil foundational plantation, come out of my life with all your roots, in the name of Jesus.
  17. I break and loose myself from every form of demonic bewitchment, in the name of Jesus.
  18. I release myself from every evil domination and control, in the name of Jesus.
  19. Let the blood of Jesus be transfused into my blood vessel.
  20. Let every gate opened to the enemy by my foundation be closed for ever with the blood of Jesus.
  21. Lord Jesus, walk back into every second of my life and deliver me where I need deliverance, heal me where I need healing, transform me where I need transformation.
  22. Lord Jesus, I thank You for this wonderful deliverance.

PRAYER RAIN

- the doors of prosperity will be opened unto me.
57. Let every wicked house constructed against me be demolished, in the name of Jesus.
58. Let the road close against every unprofitable visitation in my life, in the name of Jesus.
59. O Lord, establish me a holy person unto You.
60. O Lord, let the anointing to excel in my spiritual and physical life fall on me.
61. I shall not serve my enemies; my enemies shall bow down to me, in the name of Jesus.
62. I bind every desert and all poverty spirits in my life, in Jesus' name.
63. I reject the anointing of non-achievement in my handiwork, in the name of Jesus.
64. I pull down all strongholds erected against my progress, in the name of Jesus.
65. I recall all my blessings thrown into the water, the forest, any satanic bank, in the name of Jesus.
66. Holy Spirit, control my ability to frame my words, in Jesus' name.
67. I cut down the roots of all problems in my life, in Jesus' name.
68. Let all satanic scorpions be rendered stingless in every area of my life, in the name of Jesus.
69. Let all demonic serpents be rendered harmless in every area of my life, in the name of Jesus.
70. I declare with my mouth that nothing shall be impossible with me, in the name of Jesus.
71. Let the camp of the enemy be put in disarray, in Jesus' name.
72. Spiritual parasites in my life, be disgraced, in the name of Jesus.
73. Let all my Herod receive spiritual decay, in the name of Jesus.
74. O Lord, let Your favour and that of man encompass me this year, in the name Jesus.



PRAYER RAIN

63. Let all satanic kingdoms working against me fail, in Jesus' name.
64. Let all hidden arrows in my life be troubled in their hiding places, in the name of Jesus.
65. I frustrate and disappoint every instrument of the enemy fashioned against me, in the name of Jesus.
66. I disarm every household enemy today, in the name of Jesus.
67. Let all those who trouble my Israel be troubled to death, in the name of Jesus.
68. I scatter all evil counsellors and conspirators fashioned against me, in the name of Jesus.
69. I scatter all evil forces shedding blood on my behalf, in Jesus' name.
70. O Lord, sharpen my dull sword (not studying the Word) and repair my broken shield (doubt and unbelief).
71. I take authority over every satanic attack on my home, in the name of Jesus.
72. I withdraw the staff of office of the strongman delegated against me, in the name of Jesus.
73. Let every opposition to my breakthroughs crash into pieces, in the name of Jesus.
74. I stand against every faith destroyer in my life, in Jesus' name.
75. I stand against every unprofitable agreement and reconciliation, in the name of Jesus.
76. I refuse to assist my enemies to fight, in the name of Jesus.
77. I paralyse every one behind the extension and the expansion of my problems, in the name of Jesus.
78. Let every tree of sorrow be uprooted in my life, in Jesus' name.
79. Let the rain of fire fall on the camp of every hardened enemy, in the name of Jesus.
80. Let the angels of God take them back into the darkness where they belong, in the name of Jesus.

PRAYER RAIN

29. O Lord, plant good things in my life.
30. I cancel every unconscious negative agreement, in Jesus' name.
31. Lord, make me Your sharp battle axe.
32. Let every spiritual weakness in my life receive termination, in the name of Jesus.
33. Let every financial failure in my life receive termination, in the name of Jesus.
34. Let every sickness in my life receive termination, in Jesus' name.
35. Let every architect of problems receive termination, in the name of Jesus.
36. I refuse to reap any satanic harvest in any area of my life, in the name of Jesus.
37. I paralyse all spiritual wolves working against my life, in the name of Jesus.
38. That which hinders me from greatness, begin to give way now, in the name of Jesus.
39. Every imprisoned and buried potentials, come forth now, in the name of Jesus.
40. I command all unfriendly helpers in every area of my life to depart, in the name of Jesus.
41. I render null and void the effect of any interaction with satanic agents moving around as men and women, in the name of Jesus.
42. I pull down the stronghold of evil strangers in every area of my life, in the name of Jesus.
43. Any negative transaction currently affecting my life negatively, be canceled, in the name of Jesus.
44. I command all the dark works done against me in secret to be exposed and nullified, in the name of Jesus.
45. I loose myself from any dark spirit, in the name of Jesus.
46. Let all incantations against me be cancelled, in Jesus' name.



PRAYER RAIN

16. O Lord, liberate my spirit to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.
17. I receive heavenly flushing in my spiritual pipe, in Jesus' name.
18. I confess that my spiritual pipe shall be effective throughout my life, in the name of Jesus.
19. Holy Spirit, teach me to pray through problems instead of praying about them, in the name of Jesus.
20. O Lord, deliver me from the lies I tell myself.
21. Every evil spiritual padlock and chain hindering my spiritual growth, be roasted, in the name of Jesus.
22. I rebuke every spirit of spiritual deafness and blindness in my life, in the name of Jesus.
23. O Lord, deliver me from the lies the enemy tells me.
24. O Lord, empower me to resist satan so that he would flee from me.
25. I bind the strongman behind my spiritual blindness and deafness and paralyse his operations in my life, in Jesus' name.
26. I anoint my eyes and my ears with the blood of Jesus.
27. I choose to believe the report of the Lord and no other, in the name of Jesus.
28. Let the fire of the Holy Spirit melt my resistance, in Jesus' name.
29. O Lord, restore my spiritual eyes and ears.
30. Lord, anoint my eyes and my ears that they may see and hear wondrous things from heaven.
31. Let the fire of the Holy Spirit smash my pride, in Jesus' name.
32. O Lord, anoint me to pray without ceasing.
33. I send the fire of God to my eyes and ears to melt away every satanic deposit, in the name of Jesus.
34. Let my spiritual eyes and ears be wide open, in the name of Jesus.
35. In the name of Jesus, I capture every power behind all my spiritual blindness and deafness.

## ATTACKING THE ENEMY OF YOUR CALLING

Isaiah 59:19



*Specifically designed for ministers. To be used when:*

- Things are not moving in your ministry.
- There is a satanic gang-up in your ministry.
- Your ministerial life is being attacked by disappointments, frustrations and division.
- Signs and wonders completely elude your ministry.

• You are unable to focus your attention on what God expects you to do.

• You want to sharpen your spiritual sword.

You must be wary of the fact that the enemy is all out to frustrate your calling, but the moment you resist him through aggressive prayer, God would be at hand to bail you out.

2 Timothy 4:5: "But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an Evangelist, make full proof of your Ministry."

In the epistles, Paul the Apostle often encourages his readers to fulfil their Ministry e.g. Col. 4:17. In his letter to his son Timothy, he gives him three keys to a successful ministry.

**Key 1:** Watch thou in all things. Jesus said we must watch and pray (Matt. 26:41). This means there is no room for slumber or resting. We must be alert. The Bible says, "be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). We have to make sure we do not give the devil a foothold in our lives. We must examine ourselves daily whether we are still in the faith (2 Corinthians 13:5). We have to live holy and blameless lives because our God is holy.

**Key 2:** Endure afflictions. Persecution will always arise because of the work of God. Jesus said, "in the world you shall have tribulation but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:37). This is a promise of tribulation and affliction, but we must bear it and encourage ourselves so we can grow unto maturity (James 1:4 NIV)

**Key 3:** Do the work of an evangelist. Whatever the Lord has called you to do, make sure you labour to fulfil it. You might not be an evangelist. Your Ministry could be teaching, singing or church planting. Whatever it is, you must work at it. You must take it more serious than you take your secular job.

In the parable of the unfaithful servant (Matthew 24:45-51), we see a careless man who did not fulfil his call being thrown where there was weeping and gnashing of teeth!

Beloved, as we use these three keys, I pray the Lord will fortify our inner man with fire so we can attack the enemies of our calling.

• CONFES  
Matt. 16:18  
rock I will b

• PRAISE

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PRAYER RAIN

- womb, reproductive system and marital life, in Jesus' name.
64. God who quickens the dead, quicken my womb and reproductive system, in the name of Jesus.
  65. I release myself from the hold of the spirits of sterility, infertility and fear, in the name of Jesus.
  66. All spirits rooted in fornication, come out of my womb with all your roots, in the mighty name of our Lord Jesus.
  67. All spirits rooted in sexual perversion, come out of my womb with all your roots, in the mighty name of Jesus.
  68. All spirits rooted in spirit husband, come out of my womb with all your roots, in the mighty name of our Lord Jesus.
  69. All spirits rooted in masturbation, come out of my womb with all your roots, in the mighty name of our Lord Jesus.
  70. All spirits rooted in guilt, come out of my womb with all your roots, in the mighty name of our Lord Jesus.
  71. All spirits rooted in pornography, come out of my womb with all your roots, in the mighty name of our Lord Jesus.
  72. Sing this song: ***There is power mighty in the blood . . .***
  73. I reverse every evil manipulation carried out against my womb using my menstrual pads or dates, in the name of Jesus.
  74. I divorce every satanic marriage to my father, in the name of Jesus.
  75. I release myself from every inherited womb malformation, in the name of Jesus.
  76. Lord, grant unto my womb the power to retain, maintain and safely deliver my babies in the name of Jesus.
  77. Let the blood of Jesus sanitise my womb and anoint it, in the name of Jesus.
  78. I command all satanic networks against my being fruitful to be completely broken, in the name of Jesus.
  79. I break every anti-marriage and anti-pregnancy curse, in the name of Jesus.

80. I bind every  
81. Jesus, I t

DAILY EX  
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B. Barrica  
C. Bind h  
D. Comm  
womb.  
E. Comm  
F. Thank

## **Appendix C – Unedited Testimonies from Internet Archives**

The Lord has been faithful to me..2014 I got married and I got pregnant immediately, after 9month I lost the baby boy through cord prolapse and after then I got so desperate to get pregnant again...3weeks after we lost the baby my husband lost his job...then wee started believing in God for a miracle...September 2015 holy congress theme Goodnews,i came to camp with my husband,to God be the glory that very month I got pregnant anddd 9month later I gave birth to a beautiful baby girl and also my husband got a better job..praise the lord

**– Babalola Feyikemi.**

I have been in financial debt for over 3 years (about \$10,000 an equivalence of about 3 million naira). I prayed at the start of the year during cross over service to be free from debt. To the glory of God, in less that 3 months, I paid off ALL my debt with enough to bless others. God is Gracious. Do not lose your Faith. Keep Trusting,

**- O.B. North Carolina, USA.**

January 2015,i made a decision to always attend the holy ghost service every month .i needed that extra touch of the holy ghost in my life. Things weren't going well for me even with the prayer and fasting.i had to put an end to every delay in my life.On my way to the holy ghost service in February which was my first time,i prayed to GOD that as i step into the camp ground,he should take out and destroy every cause,delays and bondage in my life. With God, been the MIGHTY GOD IN BATTLE,as Pastor Adeboye came to the altar,he said i can see chains been broken completely.Right there i shouted A BIG AMEN.

That same night at the holy ghost service,i prayed to GOD to intervene in every area of my life. i could see hindrances and i needed GOD to fight my battles because it is only him that can give me total victory.Also i told him,i want to get married,Lord it is time to settle down,please help me. I will go with your choice because it is the best.my choices never worked for me.I am willing to stick with you all the way.Within a year after that night,i met my husband during my vacation in America, Introduction has been done and now i am happily married and living happily with my Husband. I thank GOD for giving me the best. Indeed, there are a lot of testimonies in my life and i thank GOD for loving me so much more than i love myself.i thank him for the GREAT BLESSINGS he has given me and THE GREATER BLESSINGS he will give me.

**-Eseosa Francis.**

Just after the june holy ghost service (victorious praise) the lord gave the jegede's family a victorious testimony in owode egba, around 2am on sunday. The mtn power line that was beside our house exploded.the current was so high that as the wire touched our own cable, the change over metre in the house exploded, and a fire started just behind the fence.we were able to call the senior electrician close to our house, he came, he couldn't move close to the scene due to electrocution. He then called the phcn office in sagamu for them to switch off the power from the



source. The phcn boss now called ojere's power station in abeokuta. All the while we were busy calling the name of jesus to come to our rescue as we have no one else but him. Within few minutes, the power supply was shut down and the fire went out. Glory be to his name because this is a victorious praise which will lead to our breakthrough.

**-Mrs. O.S. Jegede.**

Hallelujah...! I want to bless the name of the LORD for HIS mercies on my family. My wife and i have been believing GOD for the fruit of the womb. Daddy G.O was in South Africa recently , and the first prayer he offered was that the LORD is blessing someone hearing his voice with twin babies. I immediately echoed AMEN and held my wife in agreement using John 16 vs 24 to seal it. To the Glory of the LORD my wife is pregnant. The bigger testimony is that we don't need to do a scan, we have believed GOD that her pregnancy is that of our TWINS and they are on their way in JESUS NAME.... AMEN.

**-Ajunwa Stanley.**

Some years ago,in 2014, it happened that I was diagnosed of hepatitis B when I wanted to donate blood to my nephew who was at the hospital bed. So i couldnt donate the blood. That particular year Convention and Holy ghost Congress, I prayed about it that God should heal me. I took the holy communion during the holy communion service on saturday. Since then , I just belived i have been healed. October 2016 i went for blood test and I was tested hepatitis B negative. Praise God!!! God healed me.

**-Adebayo Tolulope.**

I have been paying tithe for years but never first fruit. I decided to obey the Word and pay it from the beginning of this year so I gave ALL of my first Allowance (as an NYSC Corper) and also ALL of my first salary. I was posted to a state where I did not know anyone or have any family. God opened doors of free accommodation for the entire year (a whole house with 6 rooms, a garage, kitchen and garden) with free security, electricity, water, etc. Also, I was never involved in any accident even though I witnessed quite a few. God also secured for me a job in a top Firm in Nigeria after my service. Praise the Lord!

**-Henry.**

In April2008, a month b4 my daughter wedded I had a revelation forewarning wilderness experience ahead but Victory at last.For nearly 8 years we battled barrenness until last September during the Holy Ghost service for fruits of the womb. Towards the end of this service Daddy heard from God that 1000 Twin babies have been released my daughter stood up to claim it, I eyed her that one baby is enough wondering how she would cope! To the precise potent word of power from the throne of Grace, she delivered Twin Baby Girls May 17th. The babies would come for dedication in August. The only living God resides in the Camp!

**-Mrs. Adetutu Ikhaghe, New Jersey, USA.**

(Testimony on divine healing delivered on behalf of sister opeoluwa temitope olowokere of enlargement of heart and kidney problem as diagnosed by medical doctors).

She took ill and was diagnosed of chronic typhoid fever, got treatments for two weeks but not healed. Precisely on August 20th the illness became so serious coupled with vomiting, general weakness of the body, her breathing changed and could not breath well plus loss of appetite. On Monday, 22nd August, she was admitted to a private hospital in Abeokuta. Several test were conducted. She was placed on oxygen to stabilize her breathing for 12 days she was placed on drips and blood transfusion as well.

She was transferred to Federal Medical Centre on August 24th for proper treatment and observation. Here, she was diagnosed of enlargement of heart and kidney problem. We rejected this report that it was the report of the devil.

We were told to go and get N7 million naira to take her to India for kidney transplant. Daddy G.O. said during the convention in August that no condolence register shall be opened in our homes and family. We keyed into it.

At this stage we called on one of our spiritual fathers in the camp, who came down to pray for her as well. At this juncture we handed the illness to Jesus, the Great Physician.

We contacted Daddy G.O. through Pastor J.A. Bayewu with two handkerchiefs and anointing oil. She was anointed on September 2nd the day of the National Holy Ghost Service with both the handkerchiefs and oil. INSTANTANEOUSLY she stood up and began to walk, called for food, eat, went to the toilet by her self and began to talk. Her breathing was normal and no more kidney problem.

I thank God for the life of our Daddy, Daddy G.O. The anointing of God upon him will never decrease nor run dry in Jesus Name. I wish him more glorious year on earth in Jesus Name.

“Who did it” ? Jesus did it to the Glory of God the father, Son and Holy Spirit. Let somebody shout Hallelujah.<sup>1</sup>

### **From Winners Chapel Internet Archives**

Somebody introduced me to this church a day before Covenant day of vengeance. When I saw the flyer, I realised my problems. Every blessed year I experienced cobwebs pouring on my body. At first, I didn't take it seriously until poverty and dryness became unbearable. I told some persons about how the cobwebs poured on me, they said it was not good and besides it kills. I made up my mind to be at Faith Tabernacle; I accompanied my neighbour to church and also told him I must see the Bishop, I was told that I don't need to see the Bishop but God and that whatever I tell Him, my request would be granted. We prepared for church and went to the loading bay and joined others coming to church. After service, the cobwebs were so much on my

face and still followed me home. I came again the following Sunday with the cobwebs, when it was time for the communion I took my portion and then I saw smoke, in the third service I took my portion again and I saw smoke as well, and someone had to lead me to my seat, and that was the end of that siege. Up till today no more cobwebs. It has disappeared forever. Praise God.”

**Testifier: Ogbonna Phillip**

### **DELIVERANCE FROM UNWANTED HABITS**

“I want to thank God for delivering me from hard drugs, masturbation and stealing, and giving me focus for my life. I was confused about life but right now I am so convinced about life and God's plan and purpose for my life. Instead of getting high on high drugs, I get high in the Holy Ghost. Praise God!”

**Testifier: Emmanuel O.**

### **AN END TO STRANGE DISTURBING CAT**

“Where I am living now, I will be six years this year. Since we moved into the apartment there is this cat that disturbs at 12am till dawn, we did everything to stop it; most times we hold vigils just to make sure it stops. Three months later I was invited to this church and it was an anointing service; after service that day I got home and sprinkled the oil in the ceiling and up till now we have not heard any disturbing noise again. I return the glory to the God of this commission. Praise God!”

**Testifier: Chinyere Ekechukwu**

### **WICKED UNCLE AND AUNT GO BLIND**

“I’m from Ngboba, Port Harcourt. I had in mind to build a house for my parents who had no house of their own. Immediately I made this decision, my uncle and aunty in the village stood against the plan and told me the house would never be built. As a result, my uncle began to pack the blocks to patch his own house just to frustrate me but I stood my grounds. I knew it would not be wise to physically fight them. So, I turned the battle over to God; I would go to the site, anoint the ground, sprinkle the blood and declare the Word. Sometimes, I would go there with my car and park just to play Papa’s message. This continued until the building began. When it was time to roof the house, my aunt said that she didn’t want the water/rain from the roof to touch her own ground or compound; and the battle continued. I again prayed to God to just intervene, and that was exactly what God did; God struck my aunt with blindness and my uncle who said he had eye problems was given eye drop to use. As he applied the eye drop, he became

paralyzed and blind. My parents are now living in the house. I have come to give God all the glory.”

**Testifier: Dcn Chidebere Aanafo**

### **MANTLE DESTROYS MOVING OBJECT**

“I have come to return all the glory to God Almighty that has made me whole. On one Thursday after service, I prayed one hour at home and the Holy Spirit ministered to me that I should administer the mantle round my neck. After a while, I tried to sleep but while waiting, my phone sounded after which I was unable to sleep again. While I was still on the bed, I felt a strange movement on the left hand side of my breast.

I did not actually take a conscious attention. However, when I sensed that the movement continued, I shouted the name of Jesus and all of a sudden, something dropped. Lo and behold, it was a scorpion-like moving object. I killed it and I knew that indeed I am whole. Praise God!”

**Testifier: MRS Ohimai Rita**

### **I AM WHOLE AGAIN**

“I have come to testify to the glory of God and to the shame of the devil. I have enjoyed divine health, vitality and supernatural healing since joining this commission. I used to spend money on hospital bills amongst other things but when we came here, I started obeying every prophetic instruction that comes from this altar. Then my faith began to grow on the various mysteries like the communion, feet washing, witnessing Christ in outreaches among others. Now my family members and I are free from sickness and we are all in perfect health. To God be all the praise!”

**Testifier: Mrs Utete**

### **A LANDLORD IN LESS THAN A YEAR**

I joined this commission in 2012 in Taraba state. I came to Lagos trusting God for a miracle house. Meanwhile, I bought a car that almost claimed my life, my wife’s and a friend in an accident. I fixed the car and sold it. In less than seven months God made a way for me, I bought a land in Epe and in less than a year I completed our house. I return all the glory to God.

**Testifier: James**

### **OUR OWN HOUSE IS READY**

I am privileged to be a cell minister and a lawyer by training.

God had laid it into our hearts - my wife and I, that we should start a day care primary school. The project had commenced since 2014. With a good understanding on corporate tithing, we decided to sow the first 200 Naira income as our first fruit.

To the glory of God, what the legal profession could not give me in twenty years, God did it for me. From a three-bedroom rented apartment, God gave us our own eight-room duplex. We moved in on April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2016. I have come to appreciate God for His faithfulness. To HIM alone be all the praise!

**Testifier: Pastor Ogbona Obiefule**

### **FREE FROM MULTIPLE AFFLICTIONS.**

I keyed into kingdom advancement prayers, we were instructed by Mama Faith Oyedepo to read KEYS TO DIVINE HEALTH. And I did it. I also joined the security service group. Today I'm completely healed. I'm thanking God because Matt.6:33 has been fulfilled in my life.

**Testifier: Gift Princess**

### **FURTHER STUDIES ABROAD VIA KINGDOM SERVICE**

My name is Onyeakor David, a graduate of Federal University of Technology Owerri. While in school, I was committed to campus fellowship. I also read every book authored by Bishop David Oyedepo that I could lay my hands on. Upon graduation, I got a phone call from the manager of the company where I did my Industrial Training, asking me if would like to further my studies in Australia and study a new course in the interest of the company? ...“with all pleasure,” I replied. Since last year the process for traveling began and I keyed into the soul-winning agenda and trusted God that it would definitely come to pass. To God be all the Glory, on Friday June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2016, I was given a visa to study in Queensland University Southern Australia with all expenses paid. Praise God!

**Testifier: ONYEAKOR DAVID WILSON**

### **STRANGE DEATH STOPPED**

I have come to give God all the glory for restoring my life and my joy back. Six years ago when I relocated from Ikorodu to Afromedia, I moved into an apartment with my wife and three children. After a year, we started experiencing strange deaths that took the lives of all our children, sent my wife away, took my job and burnt my bus, leaving me with nothing. On July 10<sup>th</sup>, I gave my life to Christ after being invited by a brother to this church. I anointed my house. Then the strange death came again and hit my kitchen, destroying almost everything there. On July 12<sup>th</sup>, my landlady died and her children accused me to be responsible but I was later vindicated. The devil tormented my family for twelve years, but the God of Winners used only fourteen days to wipe out twelve people. I give JEHOVAH all the glory for avenging me.

**Testifier: OTTOH FRANCIS**

### **GOD SHOWED UP**

“We wedded on July 30<sup>th</sup> 2016. In the course of preparing for the wedding, Papa visited our counseling class and prayed specifically that we would not shed tears on our wedding day and that anyone raising his or her head against our union would go down for us. We said amen! The lady that was supposed to be my fiancée’s chief bridesmaid came on the eve after turning down the proposal, preferring to cook the food instead; she was informed that a caterer was in charge. Unhappy with the development, she located the contracted caterer. In a desperate attempt to poison the food at midnight, the power of God struck her; and began screaming ‘fire’ and went mad. Praise the Lord!”

**Testifiers: Mr & Mrs JACOB OZOMOGHE**

### **BEHOLD MY CONVERTS**

“I returned from the 2016 Youth Alive convention, challenged to go after souls. I decided to go out on the field and vowed that I must bring four people today. I got the four and prayed at midnight again and at 3am. I went to their houses and I brought 6 people to church this morning and three gave their lives to Christ. I have come to return all the glory to God.”<sup>2</sup>

**Testifier: EDWARD AYUBA**

## Appendix D - Images

**Figures 1, 3-5, 8, 10, 14:** from the photography exhibition of Andrew Esiebo  
<http://www.pentecostalaesthetics.net/exhibition/>

**Figure 2:** from Facebook

**Figures 6, 9:** from my personal collection

**Figure 7:** Gaestel, Allyn. 2014. *Pulitzer Center*. May 18. Accessed March 22, 2017.

<http://pulitzercenter.org/reporting/road-through-redemption-camp-religion-fertility-and-abortion-nigeria>.

**Figure 11:** Information Nigeria. August 28. Accessed March 22, 2017.

<http://www.informationng.com/2012/08/photo-what-are-your-views-on-this-controversial-bishop-david-oyedepo-sticker.html>

**Figure 12:** Only In Nigeria. Jan 30. Accessed March 22, 2017.

<https://onlyinnigeria.wordpress.com/2013/01/30/disobey-your-prophet-and-then-what/>

**Figures 13, 15:** Personal collection

**Figures 16:** Linda Ikeji Blog, [lindaikejiblog.com](http://lindaikejiblog.com)

**Figures 17, 18:** Screenshot from Twitter

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- <sup>7</sup> Schechner, Richard. *Performance studies: An introduction*. Routledge, 2013:28.
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<sup>16</sup> Schechner, Richard. *Over, Under, and Around: Essays in Performance and Culture*. Seagull Books Pvt Ltd, 2004:102.

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<sup>18</sup> The use of capital letter "G" for is a deliberate acknowledgement of how Pentecostals themselves characterize their God acknowledgement of how Pentecostals themselves characterize their God.

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<sup>21</sup> 1 Cor 9:27.

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<sup>23</sup> Sanka, Confidence Gbolo, and A. Cecilia. "Comedy As A Way Of Correcting the Ills of Society A Critical Reading of Wole Soyinkas The Trials of Brother Jero and Harold Pinters Caretaker." *International Journal of Scientific and Technology Research* 2, no. 9 (2013).

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<sup>25</sup> Lindfors, Bernth. "Wole Soyinka and the horses of speech." *Research on Wole Soyinka* (1993): 28.

<sup>26</sup> Foucault, *The Subject and the Power*, ibid.

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<sup>32</sup> Marshall, *Political Spiritualities*, ibid, 142

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<sup>36</sup> Goffman, Erving. *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Harmondsworth, 1978.

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<sup>39</sup> Acts of the Apostles 17:28.

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<sup>42</sup> Boal, Augusto. *Theatre of the Oppressed*. Pluto Press, 2000: xvii.

<sup>43</sup> Bordo, Susan R. "A feminist appropriation of Foucault." *The Body: Knowing bodies* 1 (2004): 237.

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<sup>46</sup> Acts of the Apostles 1:8, King James Version.

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<sup>126</sup> It is impossible to objectively assess album success in Nigeria. There are no official record of sales and due to the vaingloriousness of the artistes, they exaggerate sales figure to project themselves as more successful than they are. Both songs have 19 million views on YouTube, a figure high by Nigerian standards. However, YouTube views are an indication a song's popularity but they not enough validation. This is because most people do not stream music online because of the high costs of procuring data. Songs' popularity can still be evaluated based on people's level of engagement and channels of performance and distribution such as playing at celebrations, making memes and hashtags form the lyrics, injecting its key phrases into social lingo, its appropriation by political or religious spheres.

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<sup>163</sup> One example will be the story of the woman with the issue of blood:

Mark 5:21–43, **Matthew 9:18–26**, **Luke 8:40–56**

Another example will be the man at the pool of Bethsaida waiting for the pool to be touched by an angel:

John 5:2-9

<sup>164</sup> In one of the conversations I had with a woman as we left the Camp the next day she suggested that our stomaching the erosion of our bodily integrity by tolerating the human waste produced by the humongous crowd thronging to the Redemption Camp part of the humbling process necessary for the kick start of the miracles.

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<sup>76</sup> In the early stages of what can now be called Nigerian "Neo-Pentecostalism" a report by *Drum Magazine* in 1977, attributed a comment to the "father of Pentecostalism in Nigeria" late Archbishop Benson Idahosa. The report accused him of self-enrichment through the gospel and stretching the logic of the scriptures to accommodate his materialism. He was quoted saying that the Bible was open to capacious interpretation and is given to each "according to his standards and education."

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